TRAIN FOR FLUSHING: curious story of the Flying Dutchman

MARCH

Weird Tales

NOW 15¢

THE HORROR IN THE GLEN:
story of a weird vengeance
By CLYDE IRVINE

SONG OF THE SLAVES: an uncanny tale of the African slave trade in America, by MANLY WADE WELLMAN

NOTE HOW LISTERINE REDUCED GERMS: The two drawings above illustrate height of range in germ reductions on mouth and throat surfaces in test cases before and after gargling Listerine Antiseptic. Fifteen minutes after gargling, germ reductions up to 96.7% were noted; and even one hour after, germs were still reduced as much as 80%.

AT THE FIRST SYMPTOM OF A COLD OR SORE THROAT—

Listerine quick!

Listerine Antiseptic reaches way back on the throat surfaces to kill "secondary invaders" . . . the very types of germs that make a cold more troublesome.

This prompt and frequent use of full strength Listerine Antiseptic may keep a cold from getting serious, or head it off entirely . . . at the same time relieving throat irritation when due to a cold.

This is the experience of countless people and it is backed up by some of the sanest, most impressive research work ever attempted in connection with cold prevention and relief.

Fewer Colds, Tests Showed

Actual tests conducted on all types of people in several industrial plants over 8 years revealed this astonishing truth: That those who gargled Listerine Antiseptic twice daily had fewer colds and milder colds than non-users, and fewer sore throats.

This impressive record is explained by Listerine Antiseptic's germ-killing action . . . its ability to kill threatening "secondary invaders" — the very types of germs that breed in the mouth and throat and are largely responsible, many authorities say, for the bothersome aspects of a cold.

Germ Reductions Up to 96.7%

Even 15 minutes after Listerine Antiseptic gargle, tests have shown bacterial reductions on mouth and throat surfaces ranging to 96.7%. Up to 80% an hour afterward.

In view of this evidence, don't you think it's a sensible precaution against colds to gargle with Listerine Antiseptic systematically twice a day and oftener when you feel a cold getting started?

LAMBERT PHARMACAL COMPANY, *St. Louis, Mo.*

BUT JIM, I DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN AFFORD TO MARRY ON YOUR LOW PAY
MARY'S RIGHT. I HAVE NO RIGHT TO ASK HER TO MARRY ME ON THE MONEY I'M MAKING
LOOK HERE. N.R.I. HAS TRAINED HUNDREDS OF MEN LIKE ME TO MAKE GOOD MONEY IN RADIO. I GUESS I'LL GET THAT FREE BOOK
LEARNING RADIO THIS WAY IS ACTUALLY FUN. I'M ALREADY MAKING $5 TO $10 A WEEK IN SPARE TIME. RADIO CERTAINLY OFFERS OPPORTUNITY TO WELL TRAINED TECHNICIANS
YOU CERTAINLY KNOW RADIO. MINE NEVER SOUNDED BETTER
THANKS. YOU SEE, I HAVE TAKEN N.R.I. TRAINING
OH JIM, IT'S WONDERFUL. NOW YOU'RE ON THE WAY TO SUCCESS
YES MARY, AND THERE'S A REAL FUTURE FOR US IN RADIO AND TELEVISION

I Trained These Men

Chief Operator Broadcasting Station

"When I completed 20 lessons, I obtained my radio Broadcast Operator's license and immediately joined Station WMPC, where I am now Chief Operator."
HOLLIS F. HAYES
327 Madison St.
Lapeer, Michigan

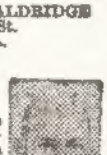
Service Manager for Four Stores

"I was working in a garage when I enrolled with N. R. I. In a few months I made enough to pay for the course three or four times. I am now Radio service manager for the M—— Furniture Co. for their four stores."
JAMES E. RYAN
1543 Slade St.
Fall River, Mass.

Over $1,000 Before Graduating

"Before completing half the N. R. I. Course I was servicing sets, and I made $1,600 to $1,200 before graduating. I am doing Radio service work for myself now."
ASHLEY G. ALDRIDGE
1228 Shepard St.
Petersburg, Va.

$200 to $300 a Month in Own Business



"For the last two years I have been in business for myself making between $200 and $300 a month. Business has steadily increased. I have N. R. I. to thank for my start in this field."
ARLIE J. FROEHNER
300 W. Texas Ave.
Goose Creek, Texas.

I WILL TRAIN YOU AT HOME
in your spare time for a GOOD JOB IN RADIO

J. E. SMITH, Pres.
National Radio Institute
Est. 25 years

Radio is a young, growing field with a future, offering many good pay spare time and full time job opportunities. And you don't have to give up your present job to become a Radio Technician. I train you right at home in your spare time.

Why Many Radio Technicians Make $30, $40, $50 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, technicians. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, servicemen in good-pay jobs. Radio jobbers, dealers, employ installation and servicemen. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make $30, $40, $50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make $5 to $10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, police, aviation, Commercial Radio, loudspeaker systems, electronic devices are other fields offering opportunities for which N. R. I. gives the required knowledge of Radio. Television promises to open good jobs soon.

Many Make $5, $10 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets which start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your Course I send plans and directions which have helped many make $200 to $500 a year in spare time while learning. I send special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 training method makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. I ALSO GIVE YOU A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE, ALL-PURPOSE SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time work after you graduate.

Find Out What Radio Offers You

Act Today! Mail the coupon for my 64-page Book "Rich Rewards in Radio." It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my course in Radio and Television; shows many letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Read my money back agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope, or paste on a penny postcard—NOW!

J. E. Smith, President
Dept. OBM, National Radio Institute
Washington, D. C.

Mail this to get 64 page book FREE

J. E. Smith, President, Dept. OBM,
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Send me FREE, without obligation, your 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio," which points out Radio's opportunities and tells how you train men at home to be Radio Technicians. (Write Plainly.)

NAME ..... AGE .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... STATE .....

THIS BOOK has shown hundreds how to MAKE MORE MONEY

A MAGAZINE OF THE BIZARRE AND UNUSUAL

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U. S. PATENT OFFICE

Volume 35 — Number 2 — MARCH, 1940

CONTENTS FOR MARCH, 1940

Cover Design . . . . . **Hannes Bok**
Illustrating "The Horror in the Glen" (page 13)

The Horror in the Glen . . . . . **Clyde Irvine** 7
A story of dreadful doom, and the "little people" of Scotland

The Dweller . . . . . **H. P. Lovecraft** 20
Verse

Train for Flushing . . . . . **Malcolm Jameson** 21
Curious tale of the Flying Dutchman, in which time reverses itself

The Song of the Slaves . . . . . **Manly Wade Wellman** 30
What weird chant sounded its blood-chilling message through the night?

The Golden Spider . . . . . **Seabury Quinn** 39
Fourchette over-reached herself when she made a compact with the Devil

Slaves of the Gray Mold . . . . . **Thorp McClusky** 56
A powerful weird tale, about a parasitic fungus from outer space

"Broken is the Golden Bowl" . . . . . **Virgil Finlay** 79
Pictorial interpretation of Edgar Allan Poe's "Lenore"

A Million Years in the Future (Part 2) . . . **Thomas P. Kelley** 80
The weirdest interplanetary story ever printed—a tale of the Black Raiders

Bramwell's Guardian . . . . . **August W. Derleth** 110
An odd story about a Druid ring found on Salisbury Plain

The Specter of Virginia . . . . . **Clive Leonard** 115
A short ghost tale of the American Revolution

It Happened to Me: A Department of True Weird Stories:
The Centurion's Prisoner . . . . . **Lindsay Nisbet** 119

The Eyrie 121
Our readers interchange opinions

Published bi-monthly by Weird Tales, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y. Entered as second-class matter September 24, 1938, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y. Single copies, 15 cents. *Subscription rates:* One year in the United State and possessions, 90c. Foreign and Canadian, postage extra. English Office: Charles Lavell, Limited, 4 Clements Inn, Strand, London, W.C.2, England. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright, 1940, by Weird Tales
COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

178

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF THE MONTH

Plan Your Future

Choose Your Field NOW For Success

Will you master fate or will fate master you? That's a question deserving your honest answer...right now! Actually it is largely up to you. You can do with Life almost what you will. LaSalle will help you establish yourself for real success by providing you with the comprehensive, specialized training for which it is so famous. Choose your field . . . now! Check the coupon below for the free booklet you want us to send you. It can be your first step toward assured success.

Opportunities in Traffic Management

The field of Traffic Management offers real opportunity only to the man who knows. Spare time study and the will to succeed have pushed scores of Traffic employees up the ladder to financial success. Many LaSalle-trained traffic managers—in the railroad, truck and industrial field—now command salaries of $3,000.00 to $5,000.00 a year—and better. Investigate. Find out how you can qualify for these higher positions through LaSalle home-study and guidance.

Law for Business Success

And it isn't necessary to practice law to get this Success. In fact probably most of the men who study law today have no idea of taking the bar examination or becoming lawyers—they want law training to help them master men and situations in business. You know that—

(1) the man with legal training is a leader—not a follower.

(2) legal training keens your mind—clears away the problems that stump the ordinary fellow and makes you master instead of man.

(3) knowledge of law simplifies the complications of executive work.

(4) Many top executive places are filled by men who have studied law.

No matter whether you are in a big corporation or a small business—in a city or a little town—a practical knowledge of law can hardly fail to be of real and vital help to you in making a more successful career.

In every state in the union you'll find law-trained men who came up through LaSalle. What others have done, you can do.

And LaSalle offers either a full law course leading to LL. B. or a shorter business law training—whichever you prefer. All text material, including valuable 14-volume Law Library. Training comprises the most effective features of modern law instruction.

Executive Training

Executives who are efficient managers command responsible positions and good incomes. And the need for trained executives is growing rapidly. We train you thoroughly at home in your spare time for every type of executive work—teach you the principles and practices used by our most successful business leaders and help you develop your management capacity—by a training built with the aid of outstanding executives.

Become an Expert Accountant *The Profession That Pays*

The demand for skilled accountants—men who really know their business—is increasing rapidly. New state and federal legislation requires much more, and more efficient accounting from business—big and small. Corporations are in constant need of expert counsel in matters relating to Auditing, Cost Accounting, Business Law, Organization, Management, Finance. Men who prove their qualifications in this important branch of business are rapidly promoted to responsible executive positions—given an opportunity to earn real salaries. The range is from $2,000.00 to $10,000.00 a year—even to higher income figures.

Under the LaSalle Problem Method you can at home acquire a thoro understanding of Higher Accountancy, master its fundamental principles, become expert in the practical application of these principles—this without losing an hour of work or a dollar of pay.

Your training will be under the direct supervision of a staff of legal, organization and management specialists, business efficiency engineers and Certified Public Accountants.

Preliminary knowledge of bookkeeping is unnecessary. We train you from the ground up, or from where you now are, according to your individual needs.

Mr. Salesman: *What's Wrong?*

Why aren't you making more sales—more money? Is it you—or your proposition? Check up first on yourself. Other men—no better than you—have found their earnings jump and stay up when they trained with LaSalle. Literally thousands of men—many of them years at the game—have increased their sales volume and earnings through home study with LaSalle guidance. Sound—practical—usable—right from field experience. Train for top-notch production with LaSalle.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION Dept. 275-R, Chicago

I would like to have your special booklet—without any cost or obligation to me—about my opportunities and your success training in the business field I have checked.

- ☐ Higher Accountancy
- ☐ Law: Degree of LL.B.
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Modern Salesmanship
- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ Expert Bookkeeping
- ☐ C. P. A. Coaching
- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Modern Foremanship
- ☐ Business English
- ☐ Business Correspondence
- ☐ Effective Speaking
- ☐ Stenotypy

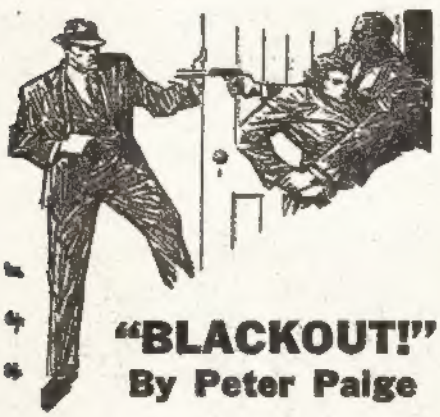
Name..... Age.....

Position..... Address.....

Ahead of the Headlines!

In the *extra thick* issue of BLACK MASK now on sale, you'll be able to read stories that may be headline news tomorrow . . . or made into your newest movie thrillers. This is the magazine that has been famed for twenty years for its astoundingly good tales . . . its characters whose names have been in electric lights above movie palaces throughout the country . . . its glamorous women and dauntless detectives who live in the memory of thousands of readers.

Bombs are falling all over the world today . . . and BLACK MASK—ever ahead of the times!—gives you the terrible adventures of American Intelligence agents in death-stricken Europe:



"BLACKOUT!"
By Peter Paige

"Paris was a city gone mad. . . . Air raid sirens screamed into the night. . . . People erupted from doors, headed for the bomb proof shelters and Metro stations.

"Stan had said that gallantry has no place in the Intelligence Service. Assignments come first. But my brain was reconstructing a ghastly picture. Someone had torn out her thumbnail, pressed lighted cigarettes against her flesh. . . .

"I said, 'You can't get away with it! You're a poisoner. You're a woman torturer. You've got something coming to you!'

"I was scarcely aware of my revolver, a silvery mouth belching darts of flame. . . ."

There are many other thrilling, chilling stories in BLACK MASK . . . stories you won't want to miss . . . stories you don't dare miss if you demand top-rate fiction by top-rate writers who don't pull their punches!

Go to the newsstand now and get your copy

On Sale Now! **20c At All Newsstands**

BACKACHE?

Try Flushing Excess Poisons And Acid Thru Kidneys And Stop Getting Up Nights

35 CENTS PROVES IT

When your kidneys are overtaxed and your bladder is irritated and passage scanty and often smarts and burns, you may need Gold Medal Haarlem Oil Capsules, a fine harmless stimulant and diuretic that starts to work at once and costs but 35 cents at any modern drugstore.

It's one good safe way to put more healthy activity into kidneys and bladder—you should sleep more soundly the whole night through. But be sure to get **GOLD MEDAL**—it's a genuine medicine for weak kidneys—right from Haarlem in Holland. Don't accept a substitute.

ANY PHOTO ENLARGED

Size 8 x 10 inches or smaller if desired. Same price for full length or bust form, groups, landscapes, pet animals, etc., or enlargements of any part of group picture. Safe return of original photo guaranteed.

47¢
3 for $1.00

SEND NO MONEY Just mail photo or snapshot (any size) and within a week you will receive your beautiful enlargement, guaranteed fadeless. Pay postman 47c plus postage—or send 49c with order and we pay postage. **Big 16x20-inch enlargement** sent C. O. D. 78c plus postage or send 80c and we pay postage. Take advantage of this amazing offer now. Send your photos today. Specify size wanted.

STANDARD ART STUDIOS, 113 S. Jefferson St., Dept. 600-B, Chicago

WORLD'S LARGEST LABORATORY MAKING DENTAL PLATES ONLY!

SEND NO MONEY!

60 Days' Trial! We make **FALSE TEETH** that fit you *by mail* from *your* mouth impression. Thousands of satisfied customers. Money back **guarantee.** Save ½ or more. Free mouth-forms, directions. Write

$6.85 to $38

U. S. DENTAL CO., Dept. 2-13 Chicago, Ill.

Rheumatism

Relieve Pain in Few Minutes *or Money Back*

To relieve the torturing pain of Neuritis, Rheumatism, Neuralgia or Lumbago in a few minutes, get NURITO, the fine formula, used by thousands. No opiates. Does the work quickly—must relieve cruel pain to your satisfaction in a few minutes—or your money back. Don't suffer. Clip this ad now as a reminder to ask your druggist for NURITO today.

FAIR DICE & CARDS

TWELVE WAYS Professionals win with fair dice. No switching. No Practice. ONE HUNDRED Keys and Codes on twenty-four different backs. Know these secrets. Protect yourself. All for 25 cents. Add 25 cents for new catalog.

SPECIALTY EXPOSES, BOX 2482A, KANSAS CITY, MO.

LAW

STUDY AT HOME

Legally trained men win higher positions and bigger success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever before. Big corporations are headed by men with legal training.

More Ability: More Prestige: More Money

We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL. B. Successful graduates in every section of the U. S. We furnish all text material, including 14-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 48-page "Law Training for Leadership" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send for them NOW.

LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 275-L Chicago
A Correspondence Institution

SICKNESS OR ACCIDENT

Thousands of people are disabled every hour of the day. Don't let sickness or accident find you unprepared.

WE PAY YOU CASH

$8,000.00 Accidental Death

$8,000.00 Accidental Death and Loss of Hands, Eyes or Feet

$250.00 Hospital Benefits

$200.00 Doctor Bills

$100.00 Emergency Aid

All are specified in the Policy

COST TO YOU ONLY $1 MONTHLY

COSTS ONLY $1 PER MONTH

The "Security" Sickness and Accident Policy gives your family quick cash when income is stopped. Pays CASH protection of $25.00 a week up to ten weeks for accident—$25.00 each week for sickness, as specified in policy—and up to $5,000.00 for accidental death, loss of hands, eyes or feet. Also other liberal features. Examine this new Security Policy on our 10-day Free Inspection Offer!

NO PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

Any person may apply. Ages 16 to 75, man or woman. No physical examination. The Security Policy sold by mail. No agent will call. The Arcadia Mutual Casualty Company is a safe company—not an association or assessment company. It has the approval of the Illinois State Insurance Department.

SEND NO MONEY Just mail the coupon for complete information. You alone judge and decide. Don't wait until it's too late.

THE ARCADIA MUTUAL CASUALTY CO., Desk 22-A
75 East Wacker Drive, Chicago, Ill.

NO AGENT WILL CALL

Please send me complete information and tell me how I may get the "Security" Policy for 10-Day Free Inspection without obligation.

Name.....

Address.....

START $1260 to $2100 YEAR

MEN—WOMEN

Thousands appointments yearly

Many 1940 Examinations Expected

Short hours. Dependable jobs.

Grade School Education Usually Sufficient

Mail Coupon Today—SURE

Franklin Institute
Dept. W-239,
ROCHESTER, N. Y.

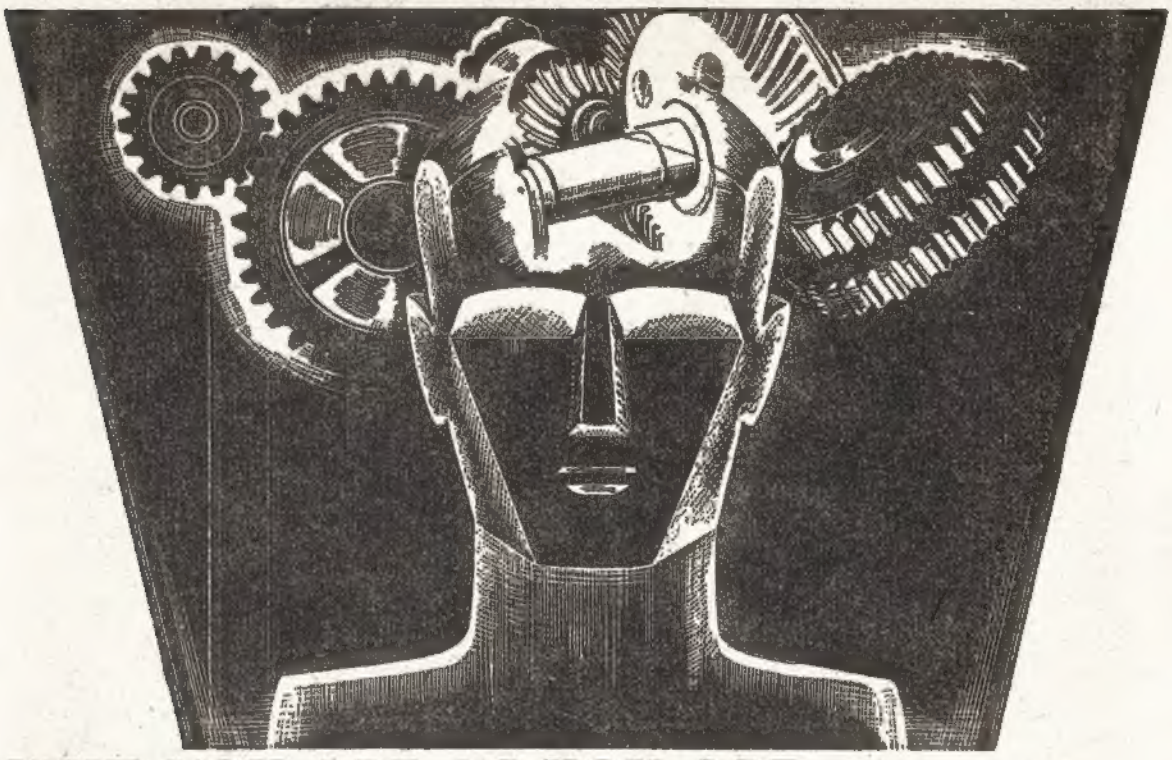
COUPON

Gentlemen: Rush to me FREE of charge, list of U. S. Government big pay jobs. Send me FREE 32-page book describing salaries, vacations, hours, work, and full particulars telling how to qualify for one of these jobs.

Name.....

Address.....

The Mechanism of Mind



WHY YOU ARE AS YOU ARE—
and *What You Can Do About It!*

DID you ever stop to think *why* you do the things you do? Have you often—when alone—censored yourself for impulsive urges, for things said or done that did not truly represent *your real thoughts,* and which placed you at a disadvantage? Most persons are *creatures of sensation*—they react to instinctive, impelling influences which surge up within them and which they do not understand—*or know how to control.* Just as simple living things involuntarily withdraw from irritations, so likewise thousands of men and women are content to be motivated by their undirected thoughts which haphazardly rise up in their consciousness. *Today you must sell yourself* to others—bring forth your best abilities, manifest your personality, if you wish to hold a position, make friends, or impress others with your capabilities. You must learn how to draw upon your latent talents and powers, not be bent like a reed in the wind. There are simple, natural laws and principles which—if you understand them—make all this possible.

For centuries the Rosicrucians (not a religious organization), a worldwide movement of men and women devoted to the study of life and its hidden processes, have shown thousands how to probe these mysteries of self. Renowned philosophers and scientists have been Rosicrucians—today men and women in every walk of life owe their confidence and ability to solve personal problems to the Rosicrucian private, *sensible* method of self-development. Send today for a copy of the book, "The Secret Heritage," which will be sent to you without obligation. It will tell you of the Rosicrucians *and what they can do for you.* Address: Scribe K. C. Y.

THE ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC), SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, U. S. A.

"This was the Place of Trials where monstrous creatures leered and gibbered at us."

The Horror in the Glen

By CLYDE IRVINE

What dreadful doom was preparing for the infamous Clan MacGreggan?
—a story of "the little people"

WHEN I came upon the *clachan** again, breasting the slope to gaze down upon the glen where I had seen and suffered so much, I breathed the cooler air of the mountainside with a relish and a taste in my mouth that I thought I would never know again.

The purple heather on the hillsides and the pastel tones of far-away Dhuaran, ripping the clouds apart like the spine of

*Small Highland village.

some great saurian monster, did not seem commonplace but were like a soft hand stroking me, lulling me back to a sense of sweetness and beauty that I had forgot.

There are people in this glen who step out of my way when I am abroad. Bairns in the roads run when they see me. Women shriek when I dance o' nights on the mountains. Some say I cast no shadow and that I am evil. But indeed I am kindly and gentle. I would not kill a little bird or crush a little beast.

Some laugh at me. And, of course, I laugh back. For I know what they do not know. And if they knew what I know they would be as clever as I am and that would never do. It would not do for *you* to be as clever as me, for then I should have to ask Queen Boadellen to take you away, too!

For I am Malcolm Dhu Glas, who is known better just as plain Malcolm Douglas, and the name of me is the way it is said in the tongue we have, the Gaelic, and it means "Malcolm of the Black Water," for it was beside the dark waters of Loch Dhu itself that I was taken into the country of Boadellen, Queen of the Borderland and Ruler of the Underworld, and there held prisoner for seven years by the time of man, but only an hour by the sun-dial that is cut around the pillar in the Court of the Seven Circles.

First you must know that I was born in Benallerton. I had the "second sight," for I was the seventh son of a seventh son and the height of me was six feet and the half of it, and I weighed one-third the meat on a stallion's bones.

There is neither stone wall nor dike nor the space between the hills nor the stretch of a loch nor the day-long flight of the eagle that my eyes cannot pierce. I can see into the hearts of men and women and can call forth the seeing eye beyond the range of time.

I can command the elements to do my will. And all this happens because I sat by Loch Dhu and met Queen Boadellen.

I sat there, looking at the gray hills around me and seeing the blood-red scars on the hillsides that would never dry again. For down these rocky slopes the blood of my father and mother and my six stalwart brothers, my uncle Iain and many more of my clan had poured. That was the night the MacGreggans came in the snow, wrapped up like ghosts, with daggers in their hands to kill my people.

On that night I had run from the shelter of our house, being young and small at the time, with the shrieks and screams of the dying in my ears, and driven to desperation and whipped by fear and trembling I had taken refuge in the hills.

Around me, in the pall of the night, I heard the chopping of Lochaber axes and the popping crunch of skulls and breastbones, and there would be a shrieking yell that would rise in a keening wail, like a banshee.

Through this I ran, hearing the gurgling screams and curses and the deep-breathing of the silent butchers. Bodies were cast at my feet, so horribly torn and severed that I turned from them and retched with grief and horror.

Staggering amid this human wreckage I fell over the dead body of my uncle Iain, chief of the clan, his head split to the brisket by the downward stroke of a heavy broadsword.

"God help us!" I cried.

"The glen is full of devils," a voice said from nowhere. "The blood of the Douglas flows down the hills in a scarlet stream and runs into the Dhu as the red fingers of the MacGreggans run into the hearts of your people! Avenge them, Malcolm! Avenge them—or ye shall die for seven years—and live in death forever after!"

Then it was that a great light came into my eyes and I turned to the valley and saw through the walls of the houses and into

the darkness of the cabins. And what I saw there no man has ever seen before nor will any man see again, I fear.

I could see into the black hearts of the MacGreggans and witness the devils and hobgoblins leaping in demoniac glee as the strong hairy arms of the murderers wielded dirk and claymore, *skean dhu** and Lochaber ax on their helpless victims.

It is said that when those we love die and we are by them in the moment that their souls leave their bodies we can see them go—if we have the sight.

There are those among us who say that the soul has a color, a light around itself that may be blue or yellow or red or black, depending on whether 'tis a child with a golden halo around it or a man of dark deeds who throws out the blackness in him.

So I saw the souls of the Douglases rise like tiny clouds of spun color, massing above the dead in the valley of the killing, forming a cloud of rainbow colors that shimmered briefly and rose as the bloody work went forward.

There, as the moon dived into the darkness, and the velvet night came down on the stained and trampled snow of Glen Benallerton, I stood by the side of the awful thing that had been my uncle Iain and vowed to avenge the slaughtered Clan Dhu Glas.

Then, worn out by the terror of the night, I dropped beside him and was taken on the black wings of sleep.

THE morrow dawned fair and bright as the steely sun came over the stark hill like a cold caress, but I awoke again to the wild fear that was on me. I recoiled from my uncle's body, casting my eyes on the dark-brown streaks that had eaten into the earth. The waters of Loch Dhu were stained at the edges, like an old blood-stained plaid discarded in battle.

*Small dagger worn in stocking.

The deadly stillness of the eery glen, the sense of awful doom in the silence between the hills, made me shudder. In the deep snow the steps of the murderers were scarlet, as if fresh blood dropped from every foot.

Broken swords and shattered daggers, thrown carelessly away, marked the trail of those who had obeyed their orders and had come behind the mask of night to wipe Clan Dhu Glas from the face of the living earth.

Slowly I crept down the hillside, turning my eyes away from what I had to see, and in fearful trembling made my way from house to house in the *clachan*. Even today, and I have seen some strange things in this and other worlds, I cannot dwell upon the sights that met my childish eyes that day. In less than twenty-four hours I changed from a wide-eyed innocent child to a walking sword, its edges keen and razor-sharp, my senses like a hunted thing of the forest and my eyes wild with the knowledge of unknown sights and sounds.

They said I was fey, that I was a mad manchild, when they saw me stagger over the pass that cuts between Ben Mhor and Ben Cruidach and come stumbling down the glen of the giants with my brogans cut to ribbons and my feet like strips of bloody hide. My small body was racked with pain and terror and my eyes were dark in the face of me, with my teeth showing like fangs and the breath bursting from me in great sobs.

There was little of my kilt left, a few tattered tartan ribbons, and my legs were cut and torn by the clutching thorns and the sharp granite rocks over which I had stumbled and staggered. Great weals were on my arms, and my chest was scarified and ripped and the hair on my head was a flaming wild torch, red as fire above the deadly pallor of my face.

I was the sole survivor of the Clan Dhu Glas!

AS THE years passed I grew to manhood in the glen where I had survived such a massacre. But now there was none but the thieving wild MacDhronas, a coarse and barbaric clan, living there by killing and stealing. Among them I was a stranger.

I have told you that I was gifted with a great light the night of the killing. It must have been the gift of the fairies. For now I could foretell the future and in a vision I saw myself bound to the Underworld for seven years—as if I were dead—and, *unless I fulfilled my oath of vengeance* —sentenced to a living death thereafter!

But I was weak. The MacGreggans were numbered as the sands of the seashore. Their claymores and shields hung in their *clachan* like the jeweled lights of the granite hills themselves.

So I drew into myself and fled to the hills, living as a beast will live in a hole in the ground far up on Dhuaran itself, near the roof of the world where the mists shroud the peak.

It was cold up there; so I wore the skins of deer and wildcats and had eagle's feathers in my hair and a kilt of my own clan that a weaver made for me, secretly.

Often I sat, wrapped in my furry garments, thinking of the fate of my clan, so many of them hurtled into Purgatory unshriven. I would flex my arm with a broadsword swinging from it—and then I'd sit down and weep at the weakness of my body. So many MacGreggans—one against a clan!

I felt the task I had set myself was greater than I could ever accomplish—like sweeping out Loch Dhu itself with a heather broom.

The weaver must have talked, for I saw men with drawn dirks out searching on the hills, but after a time they ceased. And now I saw that there were no clansmen abroad in the valley at all.

Thus many years must have passed. I had no way of counting. I became friendly with the animals and birds, and in time I had the fierce proud eagles standing round me like tame pigeons, soft and gentle. I talked to them as I'd talk to a man and they'd answer with harsh screams, the way they do.

They'd bring me small soft lambs which were good to eat. Their skins made my bed of thongs a pleasant place. I knew how to make fire and lived warm and comfortable when the valleys were high with snow-drifts and the corries* were buried deep.

Such was my despair at ever keeping my oath against the MacGreggans that it began to fade from my mind. There was no one to speak to me, and my own voice sounded strange in my ears. I'd shout against the gales that tore the snow-caps from the hills and yell poetry of my own making to the clouds, to keep my voice alive.

One day, looking down into the fateful glen I saw that all was still and quiet there; no smoke came from the cabins; there were no prowling dogs, no chickens pecking in the yards. Nothing.

It is a saying that when the men of a clan die dishonorably in battle or their blood is unavenged, nothing grows where they lie. So it was with the Glen Benallerton. Nothing lived in it. It was bleak and bare. From where I peered upon it the earth looked blasted, burned black in some great furnace.

I had been in the high fastnesses of the mountains so long that I was sore afraid to venture down the hillside. But after I'd crawled down the mountain and lain in a corrie for the time it takes the sun to cross over from one side of the world to the other, I plucked up my courage and went on.

And so, at last, I came to the glen of my departed people and saw that the hand of

*Corrie: level place on hillside.

decay had set in on the ground, and the walls were falling in. The thatched roofs hung down like taggy hair on a cateran's* face. The holes in the walls were as blank and sightless as the eyes of a corpse.

With slow and timid steps I walked about among the ruined skeletons of the houses, whose beams had rotted and fallen to the ground. The sagging walls leaned wearily toward their final dissolution. Great holes yawned, showing the white clouds across the sky.

My heart was cold and heavy as rain-swept granite as I bent my sorrowful gaze upon the lonely *clachan*. Almost I could swear that a ghostly army, blood-stained and awful, walked with me, silently, inexorably among the dwellings that had sheltered us all from the cold and the snow in winter and the heat in the valley at the height of summer.

Just this! Nothing was left of all that. The brave deeds were forgotten. The clansmen were no more. Soon—even our name would be but a shadowy memory.

SUDDENLY a scream pierced the air. Above me I saw Ehlor, king eagle of the mountains, wheeling in the vast bowl of the sky above the ruins. He was calling me to come home. But I could not go back to my hiding-place in the hills. This was my home! I was Malcolm Dhu Glas, and I was the only one of my clan alive! From this day on I was to bend my life to the thought of revenge.

But it was not to be. Little did I know that I was now well past the span of a boy's life, well past the age of a gallant of the clan, almost into middle age, now, and still I had done nothing to wipe out the wrong which Clan MacGreggan had done to us. I knew so little. I was like a wild animal myself and as fierce and as frightened as a wild thing will be. And I had forgotten so much.

*Cateran: one of the common people.

I wandered down the valley, seeing that the heather was struck black with some mysterious blight, that the yellow gorse bushes were gnarled black fingers and without a bloom, that all the bluebells had gone and the grass was gray with the grayness of death. All life was dead. Nothing stirred. The valley was still, with a hand that seemed cold and white, gripping it in a vise-like hold. Ehlor screamed again, wheeling above my head, and then, as if thrown high by some invisible catapult stalled against the currents and was whirled aloft almost out of my sight. With a parting scream his tawny body lay over on the air and he swung like a scythe across the rim of the hills and was gone, never to come back again.

Wearily, feeling that indeed I had come back to the land of the living dead, I made my way to the dark black waters of Loch Dhu and sat down, in my suit of skins and furs, my crest of eagles' feathers and the dark-blue of my kilt, on a craggy rock at the water's edge. Suddenly I saw a face in the loch!

In my childhood I had never known a mirror. In the days of the clans there were no mirrors but the waters of glen burns or the stillness of the loch, and men and women took no vanity in themselves apart from dress and weapons. So that now, as I saw the face looking at me from the dark water, I leapt to my feet and drew my dirk to defend myself against this monster with the flaming mass of tangled red hair, and the deep piercing eyes that seemed to smoke in a face like saddle leather.

But as I leapt—*it* leapt! My dagger was matched by the Thing's dagger! Fiercely I scowled and it scowled back. Then—and it surprised me to hear it, for I had not heard the sound of it since before the night of the massacre—I laughed!

I lay on my belly on the crag and laughed and laughed like some screaming beast, and the more I laughed the more the

Thing laughed! And, suddenly, I knew it was myself!

The face that looked back at me was as wild-looking as the whiskered fury of a Highland wildcat, for my eyes flashed like bright emeralds and my teeth were long and white and there was a great beard of flaming hair from my chin and streaks of flame-colored hair hung from my upper lip. The fuzzy fur and leather I wore and the great nails of my hands and feet made me more like a beast than a man, and in my laughter I had slavered, so that flecks of foam were on my lips which were red as blood.

Gazing at myself, as Narcissus is said to have gazed at himself, I felt no love for this face, but a great fear came upon me and I drew back, frightened. But as I did so I saw something come over my shoulder and with the lightning quickness of a trapped cat I twisted sideways, rolled over and came up, lunging with my dirk.

Something seized me and threw me on my face. A terrible force held me pinned to the dead earth. Struggle as I did, and I struggled with the ferocity and strength of a mountain lion, I was helpless in the mighty grip that clutched me. Yet, as I twisted my head to look above me—there was no one holding me!

Gradually the strangling grip relaxed and slowly I got to my feet, the dirk flying from my hand as if plucked out of my trembling fingers by a giant. I watched it in terror as it circled in the air and came back, pointing its razor edge at my throat—suspended by an invisible hand in the air!

Then my fearful eyes saw something that I had often dreamed about but never met. On the tip of a shattered bush that once had been a cluster of golden gorse, there stood a tiny little figure, no bigger than my hand, an exquisite little creature of incredible loveliness and beauty, so fragile, like a bubble, pink and soft and glittering with bright jewels, her tiny breasts outlined in mother-of-pearl breast-plates, her little head surmounted by a golden helmet with bright blue wings—a fairy—one of the "wee folk" from the land we never see!

From her tiny throat, so small that even a bird like a robin would seem grotesque and ugly before her matchless perfection, a voice like the piping of some insect came forth.

"Stand, Dhu Glas!" she said. "Stand up!"

I RAISED myself to my full height and lost sight of her as I did so. But soon I felt a breath, like the swish of a butterfly's wings, and she stood on my shoulder, smiling into my face. I had no will of my own. I was struck dumb by her manifest power to control me as if I were a feather and the sight of her matchless beauty and the fragile appearance she had, compared to my own wild and terrible look, and the strength of three men that surged in my great body, were too much for me.

"Malcolm," she said, "you have grown to be a man, yet you have not done a man's work. It was said that if you did not avenge the Clan Dhu Glas you would spend seven years among the dead—and that is where I am taking you! You must not speak all the time you are with me or you will never come back to this earth. And, when you do come back, you must live as one dead until you carry out your oath!"

But, I could not remain silent. I swore a great Celtic oath, and my voice must have rumbled like thunder in her tiny ears. But I told her I had had no chance against the hordes of MacGreggans. I told her how they had hunted me into the hills, how I had put the evil eye on them, and——

She laughed like the tinkling of a little silver bell and said, "Be done, Dhu Glas! I know of these things, too! But it was as it was said, and it must be done as it

will be done. You will come with me for seven years, and after that you will attend to the MacGreggans. Queen Boadellen commands you—*rest!*"

Before I could answer, a great weariness came on me and I sank down on the ground, and when I opened my eyes again I was lying in the Court of the Seven Circles in Queen Boadellen's kingdom. The circles overlapped one another like designs you will see on a Celtic wall or stone and they seemed to touch within a single circle as rings placed together will touch. Within the circle there was a stone, built like a Roman maypole, and I was pagan enough to know what it meant. This was the center of Life.

Though the Queen herself was exquisite, with a beauty that defies my poor powers of description, she was surrounded by fearful hosts of terrible aspect. Among these I was a giant, yet I was as helpless as a baby. For there were satyrs with great horns and devils of malignancy with sharp-pronged spears and barbed tails and little men with pig's faces and snakes that walked and looked like green women with naked breasts.

There was an army there, too! They were dressed in copper that glinted, and they would join hands to hold the lightning and send it out like shocks, or would play a game, like tag, riding the air and exploding shafts of lightning from their bodies.

The Borderland was greater than my own valley by a thousand times, and there were great retorts in it which blew flame and smoke to the skies; yet there was no sky but simply a great curve in the air filled with flying things and clouds of elves and gnomes.

I saw many strange things before Queen Boadellen called me to her castle which sat, like a vast bannock on the top of a huge hill that glittered brightly. Everybody, with the exception of the army and smaller gnomes and elves, was naked, and for a moment or two I had it in me to speak about this; for even a wild beast has some modesty about its body, but I was taken, by some great force and speed, to her and she spoke to me as if I were dressed in my kilt and furred doublet as I had been when she met me, and soon I felt no more about it and listened to her silently. For I was forbidden to speak.

She ordered her army to take my hands, and as they did so I was shaken as if by palsy and stood with blazing sparks flying off my body like a torch in flames. And after this it stopped and I felt mighty and powerful and unafraid. And she sent me with the army.

We took a road that wound into darkness, lighted by green torches that threw a ghastly glow upon us, and soon we passed out of this into red flame, engulfing us, but we went on and stepped into a pool of blood. They told me it dripped from the battlefields.

This was the Place of Trials, where monstrous creatures leered and gibbered at us. I would have drawn back in fear, but the soldiers pushed me forward, laughing at my fears. Some of these creatures looked like ancient gods in the likeness of bulls, hawks and cats.

WE WENT on for what seemed a long time and began to climb high on rocks that glowed with flame but seemed to have little effect on my feet. Here, I imagined, must be the Purgatory that priests talk about, for I came upon those of my clan, unshriven as they had died, suffering terrible tortures.

Suspended in a cavernous gloom between Earth and the Underworld were my clansmen—turning like pigs on a spit over everlasting fire—Malcolm my father, and Deirdre my mother, and my six strong brothers, Iain, Ronald, Shamus, Eric, Stuart and Colum—all screaming at me—begging

me to avenge them quickly that they might be free from these invisible bonds.

They were as they had died. They had been awakened in the dead of night to find Death waiting for them and no one had been able to give them absolution for their sins.

Their stricken bodies cried aloud to me, the only one alive, to be strong—to be faithful to my vow—to avenge the massacre of Clan Dhu Glas.

Though I tried to shut out the sight, seeking to cover my eyes and close my ears against them, the soldiers forced my hands away and I had to endure it. I felt myself growing weak, and with the ebbing strength I still possessed I fought against the soldiers.

For what seemed ages in Time I watched them, and it burned into me as it had never done on Earth that indeed I had forgotten them and sentenced them to almost unendurable suffering. For it is a tale with us that spirits can suffer as badly as humans, and we believe that they hold anger and spite against those who do not free them from their torture, enlisting dark forces to impose nightmares and horrid visions on the living.

I was taken once more to the Court of the Seven Circles and my arms were bound on the symbol of Life in the center circle. Around me the most beautiful women I had ever seen danced lightly as deer, but I hung there, weary and broken-hearted though they swept close to me, their lips ruby red with a great desire, their bodies swaying as gently as reeds on the edge of a blue pool.

"You see," Queen Boadellen said. "This is beyond me. You alone can free your people. And for that task you must be strong, in body and in soul. But if you desire anything it shall be yours. I can give you all your heart desires—here in my kingdom—but if you succumb to these temptations your people will remain where they are forever—and you also will remain—to see them!"

And so she tested me as she tests all those who would enlist the powers she possesses. I would pick a flower and it would turn to gold.

A tree on which I'd lean would be a soft woman with perfumed skin, and stones would become cushions, raindrops turned to diamonds.

The vast concourse of the Underworld tried me with every lure their ingenious brains could devise. I could have had the whole world for a plaything had I but weakened, had my will to vengeance strayed from the path which now appeared to me dark and tortuous.

After I had resisted these tests for some time I was called to the presence of Queen Boadellen again. In the pearly vastness her body was like a tiny jewel that outshone them all. Around her the living shield of her army glittered. Before her, a rug, made of human skins, stitched in the form of a seven-pointed star, was spread.

On this I knelt at her command.

"Malcolm Dhu Glas," she said, "survivor of your clan, for seven years you have been here, tested as few human beings are ever tested. Now you are gifted beyond any human. You have terrible powers—the power to control the elements, to transfuse and impregnate solids with solids, to transmute dross to gold, to move earth and sea—these powers you have only through your allegiance to me!

"Return to Earth, Malcolm Dhu Glas. Seek your enemies. Keep ever in your mind's eye the fulfilment of your oath. Call on the powers of my kingdom when the moment of your triumph nears. I will be with you on the instant!"

And as she spoke I was walking up the hill to the pass that leads to the glen. Far below me I saw Loch Dhu again, dark and terrible beneath the lowering sky.

THE same air of deathliness pervaded the deep glen that twisted among the stark hills, and the ground was bare and lifeless as if a great pestilence had swept it clean and bare. No birds chirped in the valley and no flowers bloomed at all. The deadly grayness of everything that lives by nature was weirdly horrible, and I stood on the crest of the hill, fearful of the glen, as it sent up once more to me that indefinable feeling of gloom and dread.

But I went down into the glen and once more I stood on the site of my home, among the scattered stones and the dead memories of those I had loved, but now I had another memory, of those twisting pain-racked figures in the space between Earth and Borderland. I had the sound of their eternal screams in my ears and I was possessed of an awful power.

On past the glen I marched and now I was dressed in fine linen with a jabot at my throat and ruffled cuffs; a silken doublet was on my broad back and a plaid of a royal tartan swung from a great jewel-crested brooch on my left shoulder. On my belt the glinting head of a claymore, studded with gems, swung easily; my dirk was of fine Toledo steel, and a sharp *skean dhu* was stuck down my stocking. Buckled shoon and fine hose made my feet look like a noble's. In the water of Loch Dhu I saw a handsome face, the face of a god, with golden bright hair and shaven jowls. It was myself!

A fine carriage waited for me at the brow of the hill that leads down to the valley of the MacGreggans, the lovely Glen Dhronna, and by the side of the carriage stood a footman in livery and on the box was a driver dressed the same. The footman bent low as I came up the hill and opened the door. I entered and sat down. The footman jumped to the box, the driver snapped his whip and the six black horses leaped into the traces.

Down the hill the carriage rolled, and far away the sentinels of Clan MacGreggan saw me approach. Clansmen rushed out, hiding dirks in their shirts. Their women dropped the cares of the cabins and with their bairns at their knees straddled out and put their hands on their sonsy hips, wishful to see the grand one who would be coming into the glen in this fashion.

Well I knew what they would be thinking. If I was not one of the English then I would be soft picking for them. For they had the air of kindly men at times and would sit and eat bread and salt with those whose wealth they coveted, and later, when the one would be asleep, they would creep in like rats and draw their dirks across his throat or stab him in the back, below the shoulders.

There were deep pits in the Glen Dhronna where dead men lay and there were bright silver ornaments among the men and the women; hidden in the thatch of the house there was gold and silver; below the beds there were thin French swords and stilettoes from Toledo—belonging to the dead men in the deep holes.

So, knowing them, the hundreds of them that came streaming from the long deep glen to see me, I sat in my carriage, knowing well that none of them would take me for Malcolm Dhu Glas, nor yet the wild seer of Benallerton, nor again the animal who lived among the eagles by Dhuaran, the great hill!

Queen Boadellen had sent me to fulfill my oath, and I was going to wreak vengeance on these people until not a soul was left to take the name MacGreggan. The shame of the world on them for the injustice they had done me and mine! The wrath of the Underworld was ready, waiting my call, and my carriage was rolling down the hill to Glen Dhronna of MacGreggan.

Their evil eyes glinted as they saw the wealth of my equipage, and I saw the stealthy smiles they gave each other and

the manner in which they fingered at their hidden dirks. The men were hard of face but tried to smile, and it twisted their mouths to one side, as if they tasted vinegar and found it bitter on the tongue.

Fawning like slaves they bowed their heads as I passed and doffed their bonnets, their hands across their hearts as if they'd be bowing, but gripping the hafts of their dirks beneath the stuff of their shirts, so eager for my gold and my horses and the silk of my clothes that their hands trembled with the miserly greed of their black hearts.

My carriage drew up at the house of the Chieftain, and I saw him standing on the threshold, as they all do, his hands empty of weapons, and not even a *skean dhu* in his stocking. He was big and hard as the men around him, a man of great strength and cunning, whose pale eyes did not miss a single silver button, a jewel or a silken thread among my clothes, my servants or my equipage.

The clan was around me, thick and stifling, and my footman had to fight his way through the caterans and the women and children until he could open the door. I waited, knowing that the Chieftain was eager for my arrival, and in time the door opened and I stepped out.

They gasped as they saw the splendor of my clothes, the jewels that glittered in my jabot, on my weapons and the fingers of my hands. As one man they bowed, shooting me glances of hate and unruly greed, as I marched up to Gregor MacGreggan.

Instantly the great studded door behind was thrown open as he raised his hand, and he welcomed me in tones that were soft and gentlemanly, and his smiles were sunny on his face, though, like the rest of the men of his name, his mouth was twisted. I stepped into the great hall of his castle and stood by the fire and there, above the mantel, I saw the claymores of my father and my uncle, the two leaders of my clan.

They were stuck behind the battered targe that had shielded my father's heart in many a battle, battles fought clean with a man's enemy before his face; and now they hung in the hall of a treacherous snake, a man who could come to a *clachan* and eat bread and salt with his host, and rise in the night and kill him.

MY HEART blazed as I saw this, and my hands trembled as I held them out to the fire. He saw me and said, in an oily voice, "You must be from the South? Because it is the Southern men who feel the cold here. We are used to it, being men of the hills. And what might the name be at you?"

"My name is Lanarkton!" I answered him readily, knowing it was a Sassenach* name and it would throw him off the scent, and as he spoke to me in English, thinking I had no Gaelic, I allowed him to think so; for it would be better for my plans if he and his men thought I did not know the old tongue.

While I stood before the fire, warming myself, one of his villainous clansmen came in and took off his bonnet, saying in Gaelic, "May God bless this house!" and at the words I felt weak and ill; for the name is one that has a weakening on those who have lived on the Borderland as long as I did. But I felt strength come back to me as Gregor MacGreggan, with a smile, said in Gaelic to his servitor, "You need not be so civil, Donald! This is a Sassenach with no Gaelic at him; so never mind the blessing, for you know well I seldom use it!"

Then MacGreggan swung round on me and said, "Indeed, now, it is glad I am that you've come to the poor home of MacGreggan and honored us with your presence; for tonight we will be having a big meal of venison and plenty to go with it in the way of usqubaugh—which is our Highland drink called 'whisky'—and be-

*English.

fore the gloaming the young men of the clan will be at the games."

"That is something I would like to see," I answered, keeping my eyes on his servitor, who prowled about like a curious cat, watching everything I did and moving his head eagerly as my jewels flashed. So, calling to the servitor to bring some whisky, he sat down before the fire on a wide chair laced with thongs and leather, and I sat down opposite him and we talked on this and that and he was trying to find out where I came from and what family I had and if I was on a mission to the North.

Knowing it would whet his murderous greed, I told him I was alone in the world, that I had inherited great wealth from my father and was making a tour of the North for a manuscript I was going to make for the monks at Saint Goddard's in the South. When he heard that I could read and write he became fulsome, and as the whisky arrived and we drank horns of the fiery liquid he became rough and coarse and jested about women and maids in a most disgusting way.

Thus, drinking and making these coarse and repellent jests, we passed the hours until we were called forth for the games. I looked round for my servants, but they were nowhere to be seen, and when I asked for them I saw the men around me exchange glances that seemed evil and full of hate and guile. But I was not to be forsworn, and in time they came to me, looking weary and sick, and took me to a room, a great bare stone room with iron manacles on the walls that, at first, I thought was a prison.

My host apologized for the delay in procuring my servants and explained that they were being shown around the *clachan;* but I had my own ideas about that, and as soon as the door was closed behind him I waited and then walked over and pulled it open quickly, to find his evil-faced servitor apparently tying the throngs around my brogans. I waited while he got up and went away.

Then I washed and had my men bring up my boxes and changed into another shirt with new jabot and ruffled cuffs and took a great handful of copper pennies with me and then walked out to see the games. The Chieftain was waiting for me, his brow as black as thunder, but he swept it from his face with a smile in which I was quick enough to detect his avarice and, from what my servants told me, that they had been held at the dirk-point and robbed of their money, I was ready for him.

"You have a very rough courtesy in these parts," I said without returning his smile. This took him aback, and the scowl came back to his face as I told him of the plight of my men. For an instant he could not face me, but then he turned around and began to curse the caterans in English, which, of course, they did not understand.

"May Hell damn you!" he screeched at them. "You have taken from this gentleman's servants the money they had with them and what valuables they carried! Bring them back instantly!" And then, in Gaelic, he cried, "The Sassenach fool has found out about the servants and what you did to them. You acted overhasty. Now bring the stuff back and give it to him, and soon, tonight or tomorrow night, you will have it back again with more!" And they trooped up and laid the stolen money and clothes at my feet. I called my men and gave it back to them, thanked the Chieftain and took my place beside him as the games started.

HE APOLOGIZED for his men, explaining that their manners were uncouth and that they never saw many like me or my servants and, like innocent children, just picked what they wanted. I smiled at him and pretended to swallow his transparent excuses as the members of the clan prepared to wrestle, toss the caber,

engage in the battle of broadswords and singlesticks and otherwise show their skill.

As each man won an event I tossed him a handful of coppers which instantly changed to gold, and the looks of envy, greed and malice that suffused their faces was reflected in the bared fangs of the less successful and the almost uncontrollable impulse of all there to kill me outright.

But the games went off without incident, although a bowman, with a yard-long arrow, almost pierced my throat as he let fly at the target; but my sojourn with Queen Boadellen had given me a foreknowledge of this and I bent down, ostensibly to pick up a coin I had dropped, and the evil servitor of MacGreggan, who stood at my back with his hand on his dirk, toppled to the earth with the arrow transfixing his heart. His face screwed up in devilish pain as his body was carried away, almost as if, even in death, he hated to lose sight of me.

Those were terrible days in Scotland and life was as cheap as a rabbit's fur; so I did not say anything when MacGreggan cursed loudly, drew a dirk from a nearby clansman and slew the archer. Nor did anyone else. Their faces were cold and stony.

Such things did not lessen my enjoyment of the games nor cause me sorrow in any way, for soon now I was going to do some killing myself and what had happened this afternoon would be but a pretty interlude.

I began to roll my revenge on this hellish crew around my heart, as a drinking man rolls a mouthful of wine around his tongue, and the feel of it was like fresh blood running through me and I felt myself surging inside with demoniac energy.

There are many people who will declare that it was not possible for me to do all this, but, as I shall show you, it was easy for one in league with the forces of the Underworld as I was; too easy, as a matter of fact! I could have struck every man of this rotten crew dead on the instant, but that would not have satisfied me; for I still thought of all my family had been forced to suffer by their untimely deaths, and in the memory of their twisted bodies, alternately burning and renewing on the red-hot hill of the Borderland, I hardened my heart.

So I smiled when MacGreggan asked me indoors and I saw that the table was laid with horn drinking-glasses and silver plates for a big party. There were no knives, as all men in those days used their *skean dhu* daggers which they wore in the tie of their stockings, or skewered the meat on dirks and put it to their mouths if they did not just use their fingers.

Well I knew this sort of dinner. It is given by those who wish to kill their guests, for, by the custom, it is a dinner where claymores are not carried and only the dirk is used, and without a claymore a victim has no chance against a dozen dirks.

I noticed that even the servants carried dirks, and so, loosing my claymore, with its glittering jeweled handle, I gave it to my host and watched his piggy eyes gleam greedily. I had walked into his trap! But, again, he smiled and so did I.

The dinner proceeded, a wild boar's head and venison and grouse and a newly-slaughtered lamb following each other, and the grease-splashed faces of my fellow-diners looked weird in the light of the wall sconces as they wolfed the meat, tearing it apart with fanged mouths and slobbering the fatty pieces into their gaping jaws.

Soon, I knew, they would be sated with meat and the wild Scots whisky, and then their murderous bloodshot eyes would turn on me, their dirks would flash out from the scabbards and they would fall upon me and hack me to pieces. So I was ready!

THE signal was given almost before I could set myself, but I leaped away from the table and cried: "Queen Boadellen

—give me your powers!" before the first cateran had snatched his blade from his belt.

As by magic the room burst into crackling flame as the copper-armored army of the Borderland capered about, touching the men lightly, forming a chain of flashing power between me and the men who would murder me.

The murderous clansmen found themselves struggling in the grip of a force they could not see. Only to me were the hosts of the Underworld visible, laughter gleaming from their faces as they spun and flew among the MacGreggans. And every man they touched twisted in agony, their mouths flying open with pain and their eyeballs bursting in their heads, while their bodies seemed to discharge a horrid smell of burning flesh, and the steam that rose from them was a sickening smell in the air. I could see them burning to death before me, their dirks flashing sparks as they strove to throw them away.

In all this Gregor MacGreggan stood as if turned to stone!

Suddenly he began to scream as the sight of the dying men broke his spell of horror. "In the name of——" he began, but a sprite flew near him and his hand flew to his scorched lips, and I laughed madly at the sight of his fear-struck face.

"Now!" I yelled above the noise. "Now, MacGreggan—it is Malcolm Dhu Glas you are dealing with! It is the last of the clan—the clan you hoped had been lost forever! You—and all with you—prepare for your fate!"

There was a great roar outside, and the surge of hundreds of maddened clansmen beat open the great door. But at the sight and the smell that met them they recoiled, their eyes filled with terror, and turning about saw the glen begin to fill with shadowy shapes, while above them, where the hills meet, the air was filled with flame that leapt from peak to peak, thunder rolled in the sky and the earth buckled beneath them.

"Send my father—send my uncle—send my brothers—O Queen Boadellen!" I cried, and there was a great scream of fear from the crowd at the awful sight of my dead family coming in great jumps down the hillside, their wounds gaping open, my uncle's ghastly head erect with its single gleaming eye. . . .

With a leap I tore down the claymores and threw them to the dead. My father grasped his. My uncle gripped the metal basket-hilt of his own weapon. I recovered my jeweled sword and with fury and wildness, dead and living eyes gleaming in our faces, we fell upon MacGreggan and sliced him apart, his body falling in shivering pieces beneath the blades! On the points of the swords we carried him like food for dogs and threw him among his clansmen.

Now Hell opened up as Queen Boadellen's hordes set in among the clansmen, sprites and gnomes tearing them with red-hot pincers, the army of copper soldiers spitting fire and flame, while great monsters set upon them with teeth and claws.

All over the glen there was a roaring and thundering such as no man had heard before and the earth shook and trembled. Smoke belched upward. Flames roared. Houses blew apart in a rain of hot stones. Thatches flared like torches and a great screaming and shrieking split the ear-drums as if all the banshees in Hell were loose.

In less time than it takes to tell, the Clan MacGreggan was no more. Not a living soul remained of that once flourishing family whose black deeds were a byword in the land. The hillsides were covered with them as our own glen had been covered with our dead clansmen.

And amid the ruins I danced in berserk glee!

Vanished were my servants and gone was my handsome carriage. Into whatever home they had earned by their release the spirits

of my kinsmen were sped. I was alone, a mad wild thing dancing on the grave of the MacGreggans as night cast its veil upon the awful scene.

AS I walked back to my own glen, the great claymore I clutched in my hand became the old scarred blade I had worn before I met Queen Boadellen. Once again I was clad in my old tattered kilt and furred doublet. The wild eagles' feathers were still in my hair and my feet were clad in lambskin brogans tied with rough leathern thongs.

At the brow of the hill, as I saw the glen before me, I felt it would be different.

And so it was. The village was back again as it had been in the days of my father. The flowers were blooming on the mountainside and bluebells nodded in the forest. Dark are the waters of Loch Dhu, but now the sky was pearly blue and the waters smiled a welcome to me.

The hills were covered with green grass, and except for the deep scars on the hillside which would always be there to remind me of our vanished name, everything was as it had been before the Clan MacGreggan came over the pass in the snow, shrouded like ghosts, with claymores, dirks and Lochaber axes to murder my people.

Do not believe those who will say I am mad and that I dreamed all this; nor those who will tell you that a great volcanic eruption visited the Glen Dhronna and killed every living soul in it. *I* know what happened — for I was seven years with Queen Boadellen in the Borderland—and I have the power to move the world!

The Dweller

By H. P. LOVECRAFT

It had been old when Babylon was new;
None knew how long it slept beneath that mound,
Where in the end our questing shovels found
Its granite blocks and brought it back to view.
There were vast pavements and foundation walls,
And crumbling slabs and statues, carved to show
Fantastic beings of some long ago
Past anything the world of man recalls.

And then we saw those stone steps leading down
Through a choked gate of graven dolomite
To some black haven of eternal night
Where elder signs and primal secrets frown.
We cleared a path . . . but raced in mad retreat
When from below we heard those clumping feet.

"Not all the devils in Hell nor all the angels in Heaven shall stop me!"

Train for Flushing

By MALCOLM JAMESON

An odd and fascinating story that runs backward instead of forward—a curious tale of the Flying Dutchman

"THEY ought never to have hired that man. Even the most stupid of personnel managers should have seen at a glance that he was mad. Perhaps it is too much to expect such efficiency these days—in *my* time a thing like this could not have happened. They would have known the fellow was under a curse! It only shows what the world has come to. But I can tell you that

if we ever do get off this crazy runaway car, I intend to turn the Interboro wrong-side out. They needn't think because I am an old man and retired that I am a nobody they can push around. My son Henry, the lawyer one, will build a fire under them—he knows people in this town.

"And I am not the only victim of the maniac. There is a pleasant, elderly woman here in the car with me. She was much frightened at first, but she had recognized me for a solid man, and now she stays close to me all the time. She is a Mrs. Herrick, and a quite nice woman. It was her idea that I write this down—it will help us refresh our memories when we come to testify.

"Just at the moment, we are speeding atrociously *downtown* along the Seventh Avenue line of the subway—but we are on the *uptown* express track! The first few times we tore through those other trains it was terrible—I thought we were sure to be killed—and even if we were not, I have to think of my heart. Dr. Steinback told me only last week how careful I should be. Mrs. Herrick has been very brave about it, but it is a scandalous thing to subject anyone to, above all such a kindly little person.

"The madman who seems to be directing us (if charging wildly up and down these tracks implies *direction*), is now looking out the front door, staring horribly at the gloom rushing at us. He is a big man and heavy-set, very weathered and tough-looking. I am nearing eighty and slight.

There is nothing I can do but wait for the final crash; for crash we must, sooner or later, unless some Interboro official has brains enough to shut off the current to stop us. If *he* escapes the crash, the police will know him by his heavy red beard and tattooing on the backs of his hands. The beard is square-cut and there cannot be another one like it in all New York.

"But I notice I have failed to put down how this insane ride began. My granddaughter, Mrs. Charles L. Terneck, wanted me to see the World's Fair, and was to come in from Great Neck and meet me at the subway station. I will say that she insisted someone come with me, but I can take care of myself—I always have—even if my eyes and ears are not what they used to be.

"THE train was crowded, but somebody gave me a seat in a corner. Just before we reached the stop, the woman next to me, this Mrs. Herrick, had asked if I knew how to get to Whitestone from Flushing. It was while I was telling her what I knew about the busses, that the train stopped and let everybody off the car but us. I was somewhat irritated at missing the station, but knew that all I had to do was stay on the car, go to Flushing and return. It was then that the maniac guard came in and behaved so queerly.

"This car was the last one in the train, and the guard had been standing where he belongs, on the platform. But he came into the car, walking with a curious rolling walk (but I do not mean to imply he was drunk, for I do not think so) and his manner was what you might call masterful, almost overbearing. He stopped at the middle door and looked very intently out to the north, at the sound.

"'*That* is not the Scheldt!' he called out, angrily, with a thick, foreign accent, and then he said 'Bah!' loudly, in a tone of disgusted disillusionment.

"He seemed of a sudden to fly into a great fury. The train was just making its stop at the end of the line, in Flushing. He rushed to the forward platform and somehow broke the coupling. At the same moment, the car began running backward along the track by which we had come.

There was no chance for us to get off, even if we had been young and active. The doors were not opened, it happened so quickly.

"Then he came into the car, muttering to himself. His eye caught the sign of painted tin they put in the windows to show the destination of the trains. He snatched the plate lettered 'Flushing' and tore it to bits with his rough hands, as if it had been cardboard, throwing the pieces down and stamping on them.

" 'That is not Flushing! Not *my* Flushing—not *Vlissingen!* But I will find it. I will go there, and not all the devils in Hell nor all the angels in Heaven shall stop me!'

"He glowered at us, beating his breast with his clenched fists, as if angry and resentful at us for having deceived him in some manner. It was then that Mrs. Herrick stooped over and took my hand. We had gotten up close to the door to step out at the World's Fair station, but the car did not stop. It continued its wild career straight on, at dizzy speed.

" '*Rugwaartsch!*' he shouted, or something equally unintelligible. '*Back* I must go, like always, but yet will I find my Vlissingen!'

"Then followed the horror of pitching headlong into those trains! The first one we saw coming, Mrs. Herrick screamed. I put my arm around her and braced myself as best I could with my cane. But there was no crash, just a blinding succession of lights and colors, in quick winks. We seemed to go straight through that train, from end to end, at lightning speed, but there was not even a jar. I do not understand that, for I saw it coming, clearly. Since, there have been many others. I have lost count now, we meet so many, and swing from one track to another so giddily at the end of runs.

"But we have learned, Mrs. Herrick and I, not to dread the collisions—or say, passage—so much. We are more afraid of what the bearded ruffian who dominates this car will do next—surely we cannot go on this way much longer, it has already been many, many hours. I cannot comprehend why the stupid people who run the Interboro do not do something to stop us, so that the police could subdue this maniac and I can have Henry take me to the District Attorney."

SO READ the first few pages of the notebook turned over to me by the Missing Persons Bureau. Neither Mrs. Herrick, nor Mr. Dennison, whose handwriting it is, has been found yet, nor the guard he mentions. In contradiction, the Interboro insists no guard employed by them is unaccounted for, and further, that they never had had a man of the above description on their payrolls.

On the other hand, they have as yet produced no satisfactory explanation of how the car broke loose from the train at Flushing.

I agree with the police that this notebook contains matter that may have some bearing on the disappearance of these two unfortunate citizens; yet here in the Psychiatric Clinic we are by no means agreed as to the interpretation of this provocative and baffling diary.

The portion I have just quoted was written with a fountain pen in a crabbed, tremulous hand, quite exactly corresponding to the latest examples of old Mr. Dennison's writing. Then we find a score or more of pages torn out, and a resumption of the record in indelible pencil. The handwriting here is considerably stronger and more assured, yet unmistakably that of the same person. Farther on, there are other places where pages have been torn from the book, and evidence that the journal was but intermittently kept. I quote now all that is legible of the remainder of it.

"JUDGING by the alternations of the cold and hot seasons, we have now been on this weird and pointless journey for more than ten years. Oddly enough, we do not suffer physically, although the interminable rushing up and down these caverns under the streets becomes boring. The ordinary wants of the body are strangely absent, or dulled. We sense heat and cold, for example, but do not find their extremes particularly uncomfortable, while food has become an item of far distant memory. I imagine, though, we must sleep a good deal.

"The guard has very little to do with us, ignoring us most of the time as if we did not exist. He spends his days sitting brooding at the far end of the car, staring at the floor, mumbling in his wild, red beard. On other days he will get up and peer fixedly ahead, as if seeking something. Again, he will pace the aisle in obvious anguish, flinging his outlandish curses over his shoulder as he goes. *'Verdoemd'* and *'verwenscht'* are the commonest ones—we have learned to recognize them—and he tears his hair in frenzy whenever he pronounces them. His name, he says, is Van Der Dechen, and we find it politic to call him 'Captain.'

"I have destroyed what I wrote during the early years (all but the account of the very first day); it seems rather querulous and hysterical now. I was not in good health then, I think, but I have improved noticeably here, and that without medical care. Much of my stiffness, due to a recent arthritis, has left me, and I seem to hear better.

"Mrs. Herrick and I have long since become accustomed to our forced companionship, and we have learned much about each other. At first, we both worried a good deal over our families' concern about our absence. But when this odd and purposeless kidnapping occurred, we were already so nearly to the end of life (being of about the same age) that we finally concluded our children and grand-children must have been prepared for our going soon, in any event. It left us only with the problem of enduring the tedium of the interminable rolling through the tubes of the Interboro.

"In the pages I have deleted, I made much of the annoyance we experienced during the early weeks due to flickering through oncoming trains. That soon came to be so commonplace, occurring as it did every few minutes, that it became as unnoticeable as our breathing. As we lost the fear of imminent disaster, our riding became more and more burdensome through the deadly monotony of the tunnels.

"Mrs. Herrick and I diverted ourselves by talking (and to think that in my earlier entries in this journal I complained of her garrulousness!) or by trying to guess at what was going on in the city above us by watching the crowds on the station platforms. That is a difficult game, because we are running so swiftly, and there are frequent intervening trains. A thing that has caused us much speculation and discussion is the changing type of advertising on the bill-posters. Nowadays they are featuring the old favorites—many of the newer toothpastes and medicines seem to have been withdrawn. Did they fail, or has a wave of conservative reaction overwhelmed the country?

"Another marvel in the weird life we lead is the juvenescence of our home, the runaway car we are confined to. In spite of its unremitting use, always at top speed, it has become steadily brighter, more new-looking. Today it has the appearance of having been recently delivered from the builders' shops.

"I LEARNED half a century ago that having nothing to do, and all the time in the world to do it in, is the surest

way to get nothing done. In looking in this book, I find it has been ten years since I made an entry! It is a fair indication of the idle, routine life in this wandering car. The very invariableness of our existence has discouraged keeping notes. But recent developments are beginning to force me to face a situation that has been growing ever more obvious. The cumulative evidence is by now almost overwhelming that his state of ours as a meaning—has an explanation. Yet I dread to think the thing through—to call its name! Because there will be two ways to interpret it. Either it *is* as I am driven to conclude, or else I . . .

"I must talk it over frankly with Nellie Herrick. She is remarkably poised and level-headed, and understanding. She and I have matured a delightful friendship.

"What disturbs me more than anything is the trend in advertising. They are selling products again that were popular so long ago that I had actually forgotten them. And the appeals are made in the idiom of years ago. Lately it has been hard to see the posters, the station platforms are so full. In the crowds are many uniforms, soldiers and sailors. We infer from that there is another war—but the awful question is, 'What war?'

"Those are some of the things we can observe in the world over there. In our own little fleeting world, things have developed even more inexplicably. My health and appearance, notably. My hair is no longer white! It is turning dark again in the back, and on top. And the same is true of Nellie's. There are other similar changes for the better. I see much more clearly and my hearing is practically perfect.

"The culmination of these disturbing signals of retrogression has come with the newest posters. It is their appearance that forces me to face the facts. Behind the crowds we glimpse new appeals, many and insistent—'BUY VICTORY LOAN BONDS!' From the number of them to be seen, one would think we were back in the happy days of 1919, when the soldiers were coming home from the World War.

"MY TALK with Nellie has been most comforting and reassuring. It is hardly likely that we should both be insane and have identical symptoms. The inescapable conclusion that I dreaded to put into words is *so*—it must be so. In some unaccountable manner, we are *unliving* life! Time is going backward! '*Rugwaartsch,*' the mad Dutchman said that first day when he turned back from Flushing; 'we will go backward'—to *his* Flushing, the one he knew. Who knows what Flushing he knew? It must be the Flushing of another age, or else why should the deranged wizard (if it is he who has thus reversed time) choose a path through time itself? Helpless, we can only wait and see how far he will take us.

"We are not wholly satisfied with our new theory. Everything does not go backward; otherwise how could it be possible for me to write these lines? I think we are like flies crawling up the walls of an elevator cab while it is in full descent. Their own proper movements, relative to their environment, are upward, but all the while they are being carried relentlessly downward. It is a sobering thought. Yet we are both relieved that we should have been able to speak it. Nellie admits that she has been troubled for some time, hesitating to voice the thought. She called my attention to the subtle way in which our clothing has been changing, an almost imperceptible de-evolution in style.

"WE ARE now on the lookout for ways in which to date ourselves in this headlong plunging into the past. Shortly after writing the above, we were

favored with one opportunity not to be mistaken. It was the night of the Armistice. What a night in the subway! Then followed, in inverse order, the various issues of the Liberty Bonds. Over forty years ago—counting time both ways, forward, then again backward—*I* was up there, a dollar-a-year man, selling them on the streets. Now we suffer a new anguish, imprisoned down here in this racing subway car. The evidence all around us brings a nostalgia that is almost intolerable. None of us knows how perfect his memory is until it is thus prompted. But we cannot go up there, we can only guess at what is going on above us.

"The realization of what is really happening to us has caused us to be less antagonistic to our conductor. His sullen brooding makes us wonder whether he is not a fellow victim, rather than our abductor, he seems so unaware of us usually. At other times, we regard him as the principal in this drama of the gods and are bewildered at the curious twist of Fate that has entangled us with the destiny of the unhappy Van Der Dechen, for unhappy he certainly is. Our anger at his arrogant behavior has long since died away. We can see that some secret sorrow gnaws continually at his heart.

" 'There is *een vloek* over me,' he said gravely, one day, halting unexpectedly before us in the midst of one of his agitated pacings of the aisle. He seemed to be trying to explain—apologize for, if you will—our situation. 'Accursed I am, damned!' He drew a great breath, looking at us appealingly. Then his black mood came back on him with a rush, and he strode away growling mighty Dutch oaths. 'But I will best them—God Himself shall not prevent me—not if it takes all eternity!'

"OUR orbit is growing more restricted. It is a long time now since we went to Brooklyn, and only the other day we swerved suddenly at Times Square and cut through to Grand Central. Considering this circumstance, the type of car we are in now, and our costumes, we must be in 1905 or thereabouts. That is a year I remember with great vividness. It was the year I first came to New York. I keep speculating on what will become of us. In another year we will have plummeted the full history of the subway. What then? Will that be the end?

"Nellie is the soul of patience. It is a piece of great fortune, a blessing, that since we were doomed to this wild ride, we happened in it together. Our friendship has ripened into a warm affection that lightens the gloom of this tedious wandering.

"IT MUST have been last night that we emerged from the caves of Manhattan. Thirty-four years of darkness is ended. We are now out in the country, going west. Our vehicle is not the same, it is an old-fashioned day coach, and ahead is a small locomotive. We cannot see engineer or fireman, but Van Der Dechen frequently ventures across the swaying, open platform and mounts the tender, where he stands firmly with wide-spread legs, scanning the country ahead through an old brass long-glass. His uniform is more nautical than railroadish—it took the sunlight to show that to us. There was always the hint of salt air about him. We should have known who he was from his insistence on being addressed as Captain.

"The outside world *is* moving backward! When we look closely at the wagons and buggies in the muddy trails alongside the right of way fence, we can see that the horses or mules are walking or running backward. But we pass them so quickly, as a rule, that their real motion is inconspicuous. We are too grateful for the sunshine and the trees after so many years of gloom, to quibble about this topsy-turvy condition.

"FIVE years in the open has taught us much about Nature in reverse. There is not so much difference as one would suppose. It took us a long time to notice that the sun rose in the west and sank in the east. Summer follows winter, as it always has. It was our first spring, or rather, the season that we have come to regard as spring, that we were really disconcerted. The trees were bare, the skies cloudy, and the weather cool. We could not know, at first sight, whether we had emerged into spring or fall.

"The ground was wet, and gradually white patches of snow were forming. Soon, the snow covered everything. The sky darkened and the snow began to flurry, drifting and swirling upward, out of sight. Later we saw the ground covered with dead leaves, so we thought it must be fall. Then a few of the trees were seen to have leaves, then all. Soon the forests were in the full glory of red and brown autumn leaves, but in a few weeks those colors turned gradually through oranges and yellows to dark greens, and we were in full summer. Our 'fall,' which succeeded the summer, was almost normal, except toward the end, when the leaves brightened into paler greens, dwindled little by little to mere buds and then disappeared within the trees.

"The passage of a troop train, its windows crowded with campaign-hatted heads and waving arms tells us another war has begun (or more properly, ended). The soldiers are returning from Cuba. *Our* wars, in this backward way by which we approach them, begin with victory celebrations and end in anxiety! More nostalgia—I finished that war as a major. I keep looking eagerly at the throngs on the platforms of the railroad stations as we sweep by them, hoping to sight a familiar face among the yellow-legged cavalry. More than eighty years ago it was, as I reckon it, forty years of it spent on the road to senility and another forty back to the prime of life.

"Somewhere among those blue-uniformed veterans am I, in my original phase, I cannot know just where, because my memory is vague as to the dates. I have caught myself entertaining the idea of stopping this giddy flight into the past, of getting out and finding my way to my former home. Only, if I could, I would be creating tremendous problems—there would have to be some sort of mutual accommodation between my *alter ego* and me. It looks impossible, and there are no precedents to guide us.

"Then, all my affairs have become complicated by the existence of Nell. She and I have had many talks about this strange state of affairs, but they are rarely conclusive. I think I must have over-estimated her judgment a little in the beginning. But it really doesn't matter. She has developed into a stunning woman and her quick, ready sympathy makes up for her lack in that direction. I glory particularly in her hair, which she lets down some days. It is thick and long and beautifully wavy, as hair should be. We often sit on the back platform and she allows it to blow free in the breeze, all the time laughing at me because I adore it so.

"Captain Van Der Dechen notices us not at all, unless in scorn. His mind, his whole being, is centered on getting back to Flushing—*his* Flushing, that he calls Vlissingen—wherever that may be in time or space. Well, it appears that he is taking us back, too, but it is backward in time for us. As for him, time seems meaningless. He is unchangeable. Not a single hair of that piratical beard has altered since that far-future day of long ago when he broke our car away from the Interboro train in Queens. Perhaps he suffers from the same sort of unpleasant immortality the mythical Wandering Jew is said to be afflicted with—otherwise why should he

complain so bitterly of the curse he says is upon him?

"Nowadays he talks to himself much of the time, mainly about his ship. It is that which he hopes to find since the Flushing beyond New York proved not to be the one he strove for. He says he left it cruising along a rocky coast. He has either forgotten where he left it or it is no longer there, for we have gone to all the coastal points touched by the railroads. Each failure brings fresh storms of rage and blasphemy; not even perpetual frustration seems to abate the man's determination or capacity for fury.

"THAT Dutchman has switched trains on us again! This one hasn't even Pintsch gas, nothing but coal oil. It is smoky and it stinks. The engine is a wood-burner with a balloon stack. The sparks are very bad and we cough a lot.

"I went last night when the Dutchman wasn't looking and took a look into the cab of the engine. There is no crew and I found the throttle closed. A few years back that would have struck me as odd, but now I have to accept it. I did mean to stop the train so I could take Nell off, but there is no way to stop it. It just goes along, I don't know how.

"On the way back I met the Dutchman, shouting and swearing the way he does, on the forward platform. I tried to throw him off the train. I am as big and strong as he is and I don't see why I should put up with his overbearing ways. But when I went to grab him, my hands closed right through. The man is not real! It is strange I never noticed that before. Maybe that is why there is no way to stop the train, and why nobody ever seems to notice us. Maybe the train is not real, either. I must look tomorrow and see whether it casts a shadow. Perhaps even *we* are not . . .

"But Nell is real. I *know* that.

"THE other night we passed a depot platform where there was a political rally—a torchlight parade. They were carrying banners, 'Garfield for President.' If we are ever to get off this train, we must do it soon.

"Nell says no, it would be embarrassing. I try to talk seriously to her about us, but she just laughs and kisses me and says let well enough alone. I wouldn't mind starting life over again, even if these towns do look pretty rough. But Nell says that she was brought up on a Kansas farm by a step-mother and she would rather go on to the end and vanish, if need be, than go back to it.

"That thing about the end troubles me a lot, and I wish she wouldn't keep mentioning it. It was only lately that I thought about it much, and it worries me more than death ever did in the old days. *We know when it will be!* 1860 for me—on the third day of August. The last ten years will be terrible—getting smaller, weaker, more helpless all the time, and winding up as a messy, squally baby. Why, that means I have only about ten more years that are fit to live; when I was this young before, I had a lifetime ahead. It's not right! And now *she* has made a silly little vow—'Until birth do us part!'—and made me say it with her!

"IT IS too crowded in here, and it jolts awfully. Nell and I are cooped up in the front seats and the Captain stays in the back part—the quarterdeck, he calls it. Sometimes he opens the door and climbs up into the driver's seat. There is no driver, but we have a four-horse team and they gallop all the time, day and night. The Captain says we must use a stagecoach, because he has tried all the railroad tracks and none of them is right. He wants to get back to the sea he came from and to his ship. He is not afraid that it has been stolen, for he says most

men are afraid of it—it is a haunted ship, it appears, and brings bad luck.

"We passed two men on horses this morning. One was going our way and met the other coming. The other fellow stopped him and I heard him holler, 'They killed Custer and all his men!' and the man that was going the same way we were said, 'The bloodthirsty heathens! I'm a-going to jine!'

"NELLIE cries a lot. She's afraid of Indians. I'm not afraid of Indians. I would like to see one.

"I wish it was a boy with me, instead of this little girl. Then we could do something. All she wants to do is play with that fool dolly. We could make some bows and arrows and shoot at the buffaloes, but she says that is wicked.

"I tried to get the Captain to talk to me, but he won't. He just laughed and laughed, and said,

"'Een tijd kiezan voor—op schip!'

"That made me mad, talking crazy talk like that, and I told him so.

"'Time!' he bellows, laughing like everything. 'Twill all be right in time!' And he looks hard at me, showing his big teeth in his beard. 'Four—five—six hundert years—more—it is nothing. I have all eternity! But once more on my ship, I will get there. I have sworn it! You come with me and I will show you the sea—the great Indian Sea behind the Cape of Good Hope. Then some day, if those accursed head winds abate, I will take you home with me to Flushing. That I will, though the Devil himself, or all the——' And then he went off to cursing and swearing the way he always does in his crazy Dutchman's talk.

"NELLIE is mean to me. She is too bossy. She says she will not play unless I write in the book. She says I am supposed to write something in the book every day. There is not anything to put in the book. Same old stagecoach. Same old Captain. Same old everything. I do not like the Captain. He is crazy. In the night-time he points at the stars shining through the roof of the coach and laughs and laughs. Then he gets mad, and swears and curses something awful. When I get big again, I am going to kill him—I wish we could get away—I am afraid—it would be nice if we could find mama——"

THIS terminates the legible part of the notebook. All of the writing purporting to have been done in the stagecoach is shaky, and the letters are much larger than earlier in the script. The rest of the contents is infantile scribblings, or grotesque childish drawings. Some of them show feathered Indians drawing bows and shooting arrows. The very last one seems to represent a straight up and down cliff with wiggly lines at the bottom to suggest waves, and off a little way is a crude drawing of a galleon or other antique ship.

This notebook, together with Mr. Dennison's hat and cane and Mrs. Herrick's handbag, were found in the derailed car that broke away from the Flushing train and plunged off the track into the Meadows. The police are still maintaining a perfunctory hunt for the two missing persons, but I think the fact they brought this journal to us clearly indicates they consider the search hopeless. Personally, I really do not see of what help these notes can be. I fear that by now Mr. Dennison and Mrs. Herrick are quite inaccessible.

The Song of the Slaves

By MANLY WADE WELLMAN

What was that song that sounded through the night, filled with sinister warning?—a tale of the slave trade

GENDER paused at the top of the bald rise, mopped his streaming red forehead beneath the wide hat-brim, and gazed backward at his forty-nine captives. Naked and black, they shuffled upward from the narrow, ancient slave trail through the jungle. Forty-nine men, seized by Gender's own hand and collared to a single long chain, destined for his own plantation across the sea. . . . Gender grinned in his lean, drooping mustache, a mirthless grin of greedy triumph.

For years he had dreamed and planned for this adventure, as other men dream and plan for European tours, holy pilgrimages, or returns to beloved birthplaces. He had told himself that it was intensely practical and profitable. Slaves passed through so many hands—the raider, the caravaner, the seashore factor, the slaver captain, the dealer in New Orleans or Havana or at home in Charleston. Each greedy hand clutched a rich profit, and all profits must come eventually from the price paid by the planter. But he, Gender, had come to Africa himself, in his own ship; with a dozen staunch ruffians from Benguela he had penetrated the Bihé-Bailundu country, had sacked a village and taken these forty-nine upstanding natives between dark and dawn. A single neck-shackle on his long chain remained empty, and he might fill even that before he came to his ship. By the Lord, he was making money this way, fairly coining it—and money was worth the making, to a Charleston planter in 1853.

So he reasoned, and so he actually believed, but the real joy to him was hidden in the darkest nook of his heart. He had conceived the raider-plan because of a nature that fed on savagery and mastery. A man less fierce and cruel might have been satisfied with hunting lions or elephants, but Gender must hunt men. As a matter of fact, the money made or saved by the journey would be little, if it was anything. The satisfaction would be tremendous. He would broaden his thick chest each day as he gazed out over his lands and saw there his slaves hoeing seashore cotton or pruning indigo; his forty-nine slaves, caught and shipped and trained by his own big, hard hands, more indicative of assured conquest than all the horned or fanged heads that ever passed through the shops of all the taxidermists.

Something hummed in his ears, like a rhythmic swarm of bees. Men were murmuring a song under their breath. It was the long string of pinch-faced slaves. Gender stared at them, and mouthed one of the curses he always kept at tongue's end.

"Silva!" he called.

The lanky Portuguese who strode free at the head of the file turned aside and stood before Gender. *"Patrao?"* he inquired respectfully, smiling teeth gleaming in his walnut face.

"These are the bones of slaves. They gleam from the abyss."

"What are those men singing?" demanded Gender. "I didn't think they had anything to sing about."

"A slave song, *Patrao.*" Silva's tapering hand, with the silver bracelet at its wrist, made a graceful gesture of dismissal. "It is nothing. One of the things that natives make up and sing as they go."

GENDER struck his boot with his coiled whip of hippopotamus hide. The afternoon sun, sliding down toward the shaggy jungle-tops, kindled harsh pale lights in his narrow blue eyes. "How does the song go?" he persisted.

The two fell into step beside the caravan as, urged by a dozen red-capped drivers, it shambled along the trail. "It is only a slave song, *patrao,*" said Silva once again. "It means something like this: 'Though you carry me away in chains, I am free when I die. Back will I come to bewitch and kill you.'"

Gender's heavy body seemed to swell, and his eyes grew narrower and paler. "So they sing that, hmm?" He swore again. "Listen to that!"

The unhappy procession had taken up a brief, staccato refrain:

"Hailowa—Genda! Haipana—Genda!"

"Genda, that's my name," snarled the planter. "They're singing about me, aren't they?"

Silva made another fluid gesture, but Gender flourished his whip under the nose of the Portuguese. "Don't you try to shrug me off. I'm not a child, to be talked around like this. What are they singing about me?"

"Nothing of consequence, *patrao,*" Silva made haste to reassure him. "It might be to say: 'I will bewitch Gender, I will kill Gender.'"

"They threaten me, do they?" Gender's broad face took on a deeper flush. He ran at the line of chained black men. With all the strength of his arm he slashed and swung with the whip. The song broke up into wretched howls of pain.

"I'll give you a music lesson!" he raged, and flogged his way up and down the procession until he swayed and dripped sweat with the exertion.

But as he turned away, it struck up again:

"Hailowa—Genda! Haipana—Genda!"

Whirling back, he resumed the rain of blows. Silva, rushing up to second him, also whipped the slaves and execrated them in their own tongue. But when both were tired, the flayed captives began to sing once more, softly but stubbornly, the same chant.

"Let them whine," panted Gender at last. "A song never killed anybody."

Silva grinned nervously. "Of course not, *patrao.* That is only an idiotic native belief."

"You mean, they think that a song will kill?"

"That, and more. They say that if they sing together, think together of one hate, all their thoughts and hates will become a solid strength—will strike and punish for them."

"Nonsense!" exploded Gender.

But when they made camp that night, Gender slept only in troubled snatches, and his dreams were of a song that grew deeper, heavier, until it became visible as a dark, dense cloud that overwhelmed him.

THE ship that Gender had engaged for the expedition lay in a swampy estuary, far from any coastal town, and the dawn by which he loaded his goods aboard was strangely fiery and forbidding. Dunlapp, the old slaver-captain that commanded for him, met him in the cabin.

"All ready, sir?" he asked Gender. "We can sail with the tide. Plenty of room in the hold for that handful you brought. I'll tell the men to strike off those irons."

"On the contrary," said Gender, "tell

the men to put manacles on the hands of each slave."

Dunlapp gazed in astonishment at his employer. "But that's bad for blacks, Mr. Gender. They get sick in chains, won't eat their food. Sometimes they die."

"I pay you well, Captain," Gender rumbled, "but not to advise me. Listen to those heathen."

Dunlapp listened. A moan of music wafted in to them.

"They've sung that cursed song about me all the way to the coast," Gender told him. "They know I hate it—I've whipped them day after day—but they keep it up. No chains come off until they hush their noise."

Dunlapp bowed acquiescence and walked out to give orders. Later, as they put out to sea, he rejoined Gender on the after deck.

"They do seem stubborn about their singing," he observed.

"I've heard it said," Gender replied, "that they sing together because they think many voices and hearts give power to hate, or to other feelings." He scowled. "Pagan fantasy!"

Dunlapp stared overside, at white gulls just above the wave-tips. "There may be a tithe of truth in that belief, Mr. Gender; sometimes there is in the faith of wild people. Hark ye, I've seen a good fifteen hundred Mohammedans praying at once, in the Barbary countries. When they bowed down, the touch of all those heads to the ground banged like the fall of a heavy rock. And when they straightened, the motion of their garments made a swish like the gust of a gale. I couldn't help but think that their prayer had force."

"More heathen foolishness," snapped Gender, and his lips drew tight.

"Well, in Christian lands we have examples, sir," Dunlapp pursued. "For instance, a mob will grow angry and burn or hang someone. Would a single man do that? Would any single man of the mob do it? No, but together their hate and resolution becomes——"

"Not the same thing at all," ruled Gender harshly. "Suppose we change the subject."

On the following afternoon, a white sail crept above the horizon behind them. At the masthead gleamed a little blotch of color. Captain Dunlapp squinted through a telescope, and barked a sailorly oath.

"A British ship-of-war," he announced, "and coming after us."

"Well?" said Gender.

"Don't you understand, sir? England is sworn to stamp out the slave trade. If they catch us with this cargo, it'll be the end of us." A little later, he groaned apprehensively. "They're overtaking us. There's their signal, for us to lay to and wait for them. Shall we do it, sir?"

Gender shook his head violently. "Not we! Show them our heels, Captain."

"They'll catch us. They are sailing three feet to our two."

"Not before dark," said Gender. "When dark comes, we'll contrive to lessen our embarrassment."

And so the slaver fled, with the Britisher in pursuit. Within an hour, the sun was at the horizon, and Gender smiled grimly in his mustache.

"It'll be dark within minutes," he said to Dunlapp. "As soon as you feel they can't make out our actions by glass, get those slaves on deck."

In the dusk the forty-nine naked prisoners stood in a line along the bulwark. For all their chained necks and wrists, they neither stood nor gazed in a servile manner. One of them began to sing and the others joined, in the song of the slave trail:

"Hailowa—Genda! Haipana—Genda!"

"Sing on," Gender snapped briefly, and moved to the end of the line that was near the bow. Here dangled the one empty

collar, and he seized it in his hand. Bending over the bulwark, he clamped it shut upon something—the ring of a heavy spare anchor, that swung there upon a swivel-hook. Again he turned, and eyed the line of dark singers.

"Have a bath to cool your spirits," he jeered, and spun the handle of the swivel-hook.

The anchor fell. The nearest slave jerked over with it, and the next and the next. Others saw, screamed, and tried to brace themselves against doom; but their comrades that had already gone overside were too much weight for them. Quickly, one after another, the captives whipped from the deck and splashed into the sea. Gender leaned over and watched the last of them as he sank.

"Gad, sir!" exclaimed Dunlapp hoarsely.

Gender faced him almost threateningly.

"What else to do, hmm? You yourself said that we could hope for no mercy from the British."

THE night passed by, and by the first gray light the British ship was revealed almost upon them. A megaphoned voice hailed them; then a shot hurtled across their bows. At Gender's smug nod, Dunlapp ordered his men to lay to. A boat put out from the pursuer, and shortly a British officer and four marines swung themselves aboard.

Bowing in mock reverence, Gender bade the party search. They did so, and remounted the deck crestfallen.

"Now, sir," Gender addressed the officer, "don't you think that you owe me an apology?"

The Englishman turned pale. He was a lean, sharp-featured man with strong, white teeth. "I can't pay what I owe you," he said with deadly softness. "I find no slaves, but I smell them. They were aboard this vessel within the past twelve hours."

"And where are they now?" teased Gender.

"We both know where they are," was the reply. "If I could prove in a court of law what I know in my heart, you would sail back to England with me. Most of the way you would hang from my yards by your thumbs."

"You wear out your welcome, sir," Gender told him.

"I am going. But I have provided myself with your name and that of your home city. From here I go to Madeira, where I will cross a packet bound west for Savannah. That packet will bear with it a letter to a friend of mine in Charleston, and your neighbors shall hear what happened on this ship of yours."

"You will stun slave-owners with a story of slaves?" inquired Gender, with what he considered silky good-humor.

"It is one thing to put men to work in cotton fields, another to tear them from their homes, crowd them chained aboard a stinking ship, and drown them to escape merited punishment." The officer spat on the deck. "Good day, butcher. I say, all Charleston shall hear of you."

GENDER'S plantation occupied a great, bluff-rimmed island at the mouth of a river, looking out toward the Atlantic. Ordinarily that island would be called beautiful, even by those most exacting followers of Chateaubriand and Rousseau; but, on his first night at home again, Gender hated the fields, the house, the environs of fresh and salt water.

His home, on a seaward jut, resounded to his grumbled curses as he called for supper and ate heavily but without relish. Once he vowed, in a voice that quivered with rage, never to go to Charleston again.

At that, he would do well to stay away for a time. The British officer had been as good as his promise, and all the town had heard of Gender's journey to Africa and

what he had done there. With a perverse squeamishness beyond Gender's understanding, the hearers were filled with disgust instead of admiration. Captain Hogue had refused to drink with him at the Jefferson House. His oldest friend, Mr. Lloyd Davis of Davis Township, had crossed the street to avoid meeting him. Even the Reverend Doctor Lockin had turned coldly away as he passed, and it was said that a sermon was forthcoming at Doctor Lockin's church attacking despoilers and abductors of defenseless people.

What was the matter with everybody? savagely demanded Gender of himself; these men who snubbed and avoided him were slave-holders. Some of them, it was quite possible, even held slaves fresh from raided villages under the Equator. Unfair! . . . Yet he could not but feel the animosity of many hearts, chafing and weighing upon his spirit.

"Brutus," he addressed the slave that cleared the table, "do you believe that hate can take form?"

"Hate, Marsa?" The sooty face was solemnly respectful.

"Yes. Hate, of many people together." Gender knew he should not confide too much in a slave, and chose his words carefully. "Suppose a lot of people hated the same thing, maybe they sang a song about it——"

"Oh, yes, Marsa," Brutus nodded. "I heah 'bout dat, from ole gran-pappy when I was little. He bin in Affiky, he says many times day sing somebody to deff."

"Sing somebody to death?" repeated Gender. "How?"

"Dey sing dat dey kill him. Afta while, maybe plenty days, he die——"

"Shut up, you black rascal!" Gender sprang from his chair and clutched at a bottle. "You've heard about this somewhere, and you dare to taunt me!"

Brutus darted from the room, mortally frightened. Gender almost pursued, but thought better and tramped into his parlor. The big, brown-paneled room seemed to give back a heavier echo of his feet. The windows were filled with the early darkness, and a hanging lamp threw rays into the corners.

On the center table lay some mail, a folded newspaper and a letter. Gender poured whisky from a decanter, stirred in spring water, and dropped into a chair. First he opened the letter.

"Stirling Manor," said the return address at the top of the page. Gender's heart twitched. Evelyn Stirling, he had hopes of her . . . but this was written in a masculine hand, strong and hasty.

"Sir:

"Circumstances that have come to my knowledge compel me, as a matter of duty, to command that you discontinue your attentions to my daughter."

Gender's eyes took on the pale tint of rage. One more result of the Britisher's letter, he made no doubt.

"I have desired her to hold no further communication with you, and I have been sufficiently explicit to convince her how unworthy you are of her esteem and attention. It is hardly necessary for me to give you the reasons which have induced me to form this judgment, and I add only that nothing you can say or do will alter it.

"Your obedient servant,

"JUDGE FORRESTER STIRLING."

Gender hastily swigged a portion of his drink, and crushed the paper in his hand. So that was the judge's interfering way—it sounded as though he had copied it from a complete letter-writer for heavy fathers. He, Gender, began to form a reply in his mind:

"Sir:

"Your unfeeling and abitrary letter admits of but one response. As a gentleman grossly misused, I demand satisfaction on the field

of honor. Arrangements I place in the hands of . . ."

By what friend should he forward that challenge? It seemed that he was mighty short of friends just now. He sipped more whisky and water, and tore the wrappings of the newspaper.

It was a Massachusetts publication, and toward the bottom of the first page was a heavy cross of ink, to call attention to one item. A poem, evidently, in four-line stanzas. Its title signified nothing—*The Witnesses*. Author, Henry W. Longfellow; Gender identifiified him vaguely as a scrawler of Abolitionist doggerel. Why was this poem recommended to a southern planter?

> In Ocean's wide domains,
> Half buried in the sands,
> Lie skeletons in chains,
> With shackled feet and hands.

Once again the reader swore, but the oath quavered on his lips. His eye moved to a stanza farther down the column:

> These are the bones of Slaves;
> They gleam from the abyss;
> They cry, from yawning waves . . .

But it seemed to Gender that he heard, rather than read, what that cry was.

He sprang to his feet, paper and glass falling from his hands. His thin lips drew apart, his ears strained. The sound was faint, but unmistakable—many voices singing.

The Negroes in his cabins? But no Negro on his plantation would know that song. The chanting refrain began:

"Hailowa—Genda! Haipana—Genda!"

The planter's lean mustaches bristled tigerishly. This would surely be the refined extremity of his persecution, this chanting of a weird song under his window-sill. It was louder now. *I will bewitch, I will kill*—but who would know that fierce mockery of him?

The crew of his ship, of course; they had heard it on the writhing lips of the captives, at the very moment of their destruction. And when the ship docked in Charleston, with no profit to show, Gender had been none too kindly in paying them off.

Those unsavory mariners must have been piqued. They had followed him, then, were setting up this vicious serenade.

Gender stepped quickly around the table and toward the window. He flung up the sash with a violence that almost shattered the glass, and leaned savagely out.

On that instant the song stopped, and Gender could see only the seaward slope of his land, down to the lip of the bluff that overhung the water. Beyond that stretched an expanse of waves, patchily agleam under a great buckskin-colored moon, that even now stirred the murmurous tide at the foot of the bluff. Here were no trees, no brush even, to hide pranksters. The singers, now silent, must be in a boat under the shelter of the bluff.

GENDER strode from the room, fairly tore open a door, and made heavy haste toward the sea. He paused, on the lip of the bluff. Nothing was to be seen, beneath him or farther out. The mockers, if they had been here, had already fled. He growled, glared, and tramped back to his house. He entered the parlor once more, drew down the sash, and sought his chair again. Choosing another glass, he began once more to mix whisky and water. But he stopped in the middle of his pouring.

There it was again, the song he knew; and closer.

He rose, took a step in the direction of the window, then thought better of it. He had warned his visitors by one sortie, and they had hidden. Why not let them come

close, and suffer the violence he ached to pour out on some living thing?

He moved, not to the window, but to a mantelpiece opposite. From a box of dark, polished wood he lifted a pistol, then another. They were duelling weapons, handsomely made, with hair-triggers; and Gender was a dead shot. With orderly swiftness he poured in glazed powder from a flask, rammed down two leaden bullets, and laid percussion caps upon the touch-holes. Returning, he placed the weapons on his center table, then stood on tiptoe to extinguish the hanging lamp. A single light remained in the room, a candle by the door, and this he carried to the window, placing it on a bracket there. Moving into the gloomy center of the parlor, he sat in his chair and took a pistol in either hand.

The song was louder now, lifted by many voices:

"Hailowa—Genda! Haipana—Genda!"

Undoubtedly the choristers had come to land by now, had gained the top of the bluff. They could be seen, Gender was sure, from the window. He felt perspiration on his jowl, and lifted a sleeve to blot it. Trying to scare him, hmm? Singing about witchcraft and killing? Well, he'd show them who was the killer.

The singing had drawn close, was just outside. Odd how the sailors, or whoever they were, had learned that chant so well! It recalled to his mind the slave trail, the jungle, the long procession of crooning prisoners. But here was no time for idle revery on vanished scenes. Silence had fallen again, and he could only divine the presence, just outside, of many creatures.

Scratch-scratch-scratch; it sounded like the stealthy creeping of a snake over rough lumber. That scratching resounded from the window where something stole into view in the candlelight. Gender fixed his eyes there, and his pistols lifted their muzzles.

The palm of a hand, as gray as a fish, laid itself on the glass. It was wet; Gender could see the trickle of water descending along the pane. Something clinked, almost musically. Another hand moved into position beside it, and between the two swung links of chain.

This was an elaborately devilish joke, thought Gender, in an ecstasy of rage. Even the chains, to lend reality . . . and as he stared he knew, in a split moment of terror that stirred his flesh on his bones, that it was no joke after all.

A face had moved into the range of the candlelight, pressing close to the pane between the two palms.

It was darker than those palms, of a dirty, slaty deadness of color. But it was not dead, not with those dull, intent eyes that moved slowly in their blistery sockets . . . not dead, though it was foully wet, and its thick lips hung slackly open, and seaweed lay plastered upon the cheeks, even though the flat nostrils showed crumbled and gnawed away, as if by fish. The eyes quested here and there across the floor and walls of the parlor. They came to rest, gazing full into the face of Gender.

He felt as though stale sea-water had trickled upon him, but his right hand abode steady as a gun-rest. He took aim and fired.

The glass crashed loudly, and fell in shattering flakes to the floor beneath the sill.

Gender was on his feet, moving forward, dropping the empty pistol on the table and whipping the loaded one into his right hand. Two leaping strides took him almost to the window, before he reeled backward.

The face had not fallen. It stared at him, a scant yard away. Between the dull, living eyes showed a round black hole, where the bullet had gone in. But the thing stood unflinchingly, somehow serenely. Its two wet hands moved slowly, method-

ically, to pluck away the jagged remains of the glass.

GENDER rocked where he stood, unable for the moment to command his body to retreat. The shoulders beneath the face heightened. They were bare and wet and deadly dusky, and they clinked the collar-shackle beneath the lax chin. Two hands stole into the room, their fish-colored palms opening toward Gender.

He screamed, and at last he ran. As he turned his back, the singing began yet again, loud and horribly jaunty—not at all as the miserable slaves had sung it. He gained the seaward door, drew it open, and looked full into a gathering of black, wet figures, with chains festooned among them, awaiting him. Again he screamed, and tried to push the door shut.

He could not. A hand was braced against the edge of the panel—many hands. The wood fringed itself with gleaming black fingers. Gender let go the knob, whirled to flee into the house. Something caught the back of his coat, something he dared not identify. In struggling loose, he spun through the doorway and into the moonlit open.

Figures surrounded him, black, naked, wet figures; dead as to sunken faces and flaccid muscles, but horribly alive as to eyes and trembling hands and slack mouths that formed the strange primitive words of the song; separate, yet strung together with a great chain and collar-shackles, like an awful fish on the gigantic line of some demon-angler. All this Gender saw in a rocking, moon-washed moment, while he choked and retched at a dreadful odor of death, thick as fog.

Still he tried to run, but they were moving around him in a weaving crescent, cutting off his retreat toward the plantation. Hands extended toward him, manacled and dripping. His only will was to escape the touch of those sodden fingers, and one way was open—the way to the sea.

He ran toward the brink of the bluff. From its top he would leap, dive and swim away. But they pursued, overtook, surrounded him. He remembered that he held a loaded pistol, and fired into their black midst. It had no effect. He might have known that it would have no effect.

Something was clutching for him. A great, inhuman talon? No, it was an open collar of metal, with a length of chain to it, a collar that had once clamped to an anchor, dragging down to ocean's depths a line of shackled men. It gaped at him, held forth by many dripping hands. He tried to dodge, but it darted around his throat, shut with a ringing snap. Was it cold . . . or scalding hot? He knew, with horror vividly etching the knowledge into his heart, that he was one at last with the great chained procession.

"Hailowa—Genda! Haipana—Genda!"

He found his voice. "No, no!" he pleaded. "No, in the name of—"

But he could not say the name of God. And the throng suddenly moved explosively, concertedly, to the edge of the bluff.

A single wailing cry from all those dead throats, and they dived into the waves below.

Gender did not feel the clutch and jerk of the chain that dragged him alone. He did not even feel the water as it closed over his head.

"Meantime, Messire the Devil, you shall pay through the nose."

The Golden Spider

By SEABURY QUINN

Fourchette made a compact with the arch fiend himself, but whoever sups with the Devil must have a long spoon

1. How Knots Grow in a Soul

FOURCHETTE sat spinning in the sun before the cabin door. It was a poor house, built of mud and wattles, with gaps and cracks in its walls through which winter winds and summer tempests came at will, but it was hers and Jacques'; at night the firelight heartened it, and there were dusky corners where her dreams could find a lodgment.

Fourchette was happy. Contentment

shone in her eyes like a candle's glow reflected through a screen, and her little triangular face framed in its shock of saffron-yellow hair was like a flower set upon a tall slim stalk; for her kirtle of coarse linen was bright green, and fitted her slim-waisted, narrow-hipped young body as a wheat-husk fits the grain. Under her left arm the distaff rested, the spindle-stone twirled merrily beneath the agile practised fingers of her right hand as she paid the combed fleece from its skein and twisted it into an ever-lengthening cord of crewel. From where she sat she could look clear across their little croft and over to the wide domains of the seigneur where, beyond the patch of forest land where spotted deer could sometimes be seen in the shadows, her Jacques was laboring in the field to pay their quit-rent to the lord.

Her Jacques! A serf and villein in the lord's field and the castle base court, by her side he was a king. For him she saved the best their meager board afforded, the crustiest of the bread, the richest, fullest piece of honeycomb, the breast of fowl when they ate meat on holidays and high feast days. They had been wed almost a twelvemonth, she and Jacques, and before their wedding they had passed almost five years in courtship, working, saving, scrimping to amass the necessary silver angel with which to buy their right to marry free from the lord's bride-bed privilege; now they were on their way to being solid farmerers. They were not rich enough to keep a cow, but already they had several sheep, and three lambs graced their flock. A she-goat with a little scampering kid and a bold, strutting cock who led a harem of six speckled hens, together with a hive of bees, completed their livestock, and close beside the dooryard was a little patch of pasture land and a field of ripening wheat. They had been bold to plant a crop so long in growing, for who could say what moment raiders would come riding down among them, trampling down their growing grain and robbing them of any chance of garnering it? Yet *le bon Dieu* had been good to them, their corn was ripening in the sun, their flocks were multiplying, their quit-rent would surely be paid. Next year, perhaps, they could afford a bench and some stools, and after that a cow, or even two, take up another hide of land; then, if the sweet Lord willed it so, there would be children, pretty daughters and strong sons to make their little house into a home and strengthen their declining years.

The clatter of shod hooves against the stony roadway leading to the height on which the feudal castle stood broke through the snatch of song she hummed. Gay in velvet doublets and high boots of Spanish leather, with their long sword-scabbards clinking on the rowels at their heels they came, and Fourchette's blue eyes brightened. What woman since the world began has ever seen the glittering array of martial panoply without a quickening of the pulses? She recognized most of the company, Sir Giulio du Lac, bronze-bearded, copper-haired and smiling, a gentle chevalier who sat above the salt at the seigneur's table; Messire Osmond and Messire Pindare, esquires almost ready to receive the accolade and golden spurs of knighthood; Marcellin and Hyacinthe and Fabien, adolescent pages nearing squirehood, forward, brash and pugnacious as young cockerels whose spurs had just begun to sprout. Besides them were several other gentle lads and young men, all brave in forest-green and gold embroidery, and laughing hugely at some merry quip which one of them had made.

Fetlock-deep they splashed into the purling waters of the little brook that ran between the sown land and the pasture plot of Jacques' small croft, and one of them burst into song:

Nicolete o le gent cors,
Por vous sui venuz en bos . . .

"Grand Dieu!" the singer broke his song and tightened rein as he reached the brook bank. "What have we here? By sainted Denis his head, 'tis a pretty chit!" The bright, hot blood rose like a tide through Fourchette's throat and cheeks and mounted to her brow, for she was suddenly the focal point for twenty dancing, merry eyes.

It was Pindare who spoke, the brown-eyed, black-haired, olive-skinned Messire Pindare who had come from Outremer to serve his squireship with Raymond de la Montagne, lord proprietor and seigneur of the estate to whose soil Fourchette and Jacques were nailed as serfs. Now, as he rode his horse across the little garden-plot of ripening corn, his eyes were shining with combined amusement and anticipation.

"Nay, little mistress, be not frightful," he soothed as he drew rein in the dooryard and slipped down from the saddle with a merry clink of sword on spur. "We do but crave a dish of sweet, cool milk from your fair hand. Put by distaff and spindle and bring us drink, I beseech thee."

"Nay, Messire — milord — your worship," Fourchette dropped a frightened curtsy, "we have but one jug of milk. The mother goat gives but a little, and the kid is ever hungry——"

"Say you so, in God's truth?" Pindare interrupted. "Why, then, 'tis easy to increase thy supply and give thee fresh meat at the same time." With the slightly grating hiss of metal scratching metal his sword flashed from its scabbard, and in two strides he had stepped across the dooryard to the goat which nursed her wobbly-legged baby, seized the kid by a hind leg, and struck its head off with a single quick blow.

"Ohé, la pauvre!" screamed Fourchette as the headless little carcass twitched and quivered on the hard-packed earth. "My little one, my poor one, my sweet innocent!"

WITH an outraged bleat the mother goat whirled round upon the murderer of her offspring, drew her hooves together and launched herself like a small thunderbolt. Taken by surprise, Pindare went down before the furious onslaught, attempted to get up and sprawled again beneath the impact of the maddened goat's wild charge.

"Bravo, Mamman Chèvre!"

"Encore—to the attack again!"

"A golden leopard Pindare flees!"

"Taken, and another that he wins the joust!"

Laughing, shouting, wagering, his companions made a ring around Pindare and the goat while Fourchette knelt upon her doorstep with her hands pressed to her mouth to stop her unavailing screams. The kid, the increase of their flock, was gone, and now the mother—the agonized, half screamed, half moaning cry of the goat drowned the men's wild shoutings. Pindare had gained his feet and as the goat charged at him hewed her forelegs off at the knees. Now he leaped upon the crippled beast with iron-studded boots, staving in her ribs before he finished her with a slash of his blade.

The circle opened to permit the victor's exit, and the squire held his bloodied sword out to Fourchette. "Wipe me clean this blade, wench," he commanded, "then bring us drink. We have already tarried overlong at thy hovel."

She dried the sword upon her gown and handed it back to Pindare, then weeping, went to fetch the crook of goat's milk from the spring.

From lip to lip the beaker passed until it came to Fabien, the youngest of the pages. Raising it, he pledged the company:

"To your health, *Messires!"* drained

it, then dashed it on the ground so that it broke into a dozen fragments.

"Messire!" in desperation Fourchette dropped to her knees at Sir Giulio's feet, "bid them be tender with our things, I prithee! We be good and lawful tenants of our lord the seigneur, our rent is paid upon the term-day, and all is given him which lawfully is his. Are we not entitled to protection in return?"

His laughing gray eyes looked into her tear-filled blue ones. They were high-spirited, these lads; it was pleasant to observe their harmless pranks. "So much is bound to be paid to the seigneur as of right," he answered, speaking slowly, as to a dull child, "but he may take the rest too, if he likes. You are serfs of the body, you and your husband; you and all you have are his, and may be taken for his use and pleasure, or the use and pleasure of his servants. These be retainers of the seigneur, woman. They do but exercise his right of prehension in his absence and by his leave."

Two of the pages seized her underneath the arms, raised her to her feet and urged her, half running, half falling, to the hut. They paused a moment, kicked the door back, thrust her across the threshold.

2. *Ad Diabolum*

FOURCHETTE knelt by her bed. Her fresh green gown was torn almost to tatters and soiled until it looked like a potrag; her long bright hair poured round her face and spilled in a bright pool upon the cabin's earthen floor. Her arms were stretched across the broken bed, her fingers interlaced. Tears were rolling in big, slow drops down her cheeks. She did not sob or move in any way; she just knelt there, as still as if she were a carven figure of repentant Magdalene. Once or twice a heavy, hard breath rasped between her teeth, but it was neither sob nor moan, only the instinctive sighing of a body in which the soul has been crushed. Her world was broken into fragments as irrevocably as the pitcher which the thoughtless page had smashed; their little patch of corn was trampled in the earth, their goat was gone, their kid was gone, their house dishonored . . . and she . . .

Wearily she raised herself, holding to the broken bed for support. A mile away the river bawled and shouted through a gully set with saw-toothed rocks. There was her goal and destiny; no other refuge offered, there was no other place for such as she. She took a step and almost fell prone on her face; her tortured, fragile limbs could scarce support the dreadful burden lodged within her breast. Strange that a broken heart could so outweigh a whole one.

"Adieu, mon Jacques," she murmured as she took a second painful step, "for this world and the next and all eternity——"

"And are you really bent on self-destruction, little pretty Mistress? Nay, 'twere a foolish thing to do so soon!" Softly, scarcely louder than the soughing of the breeze across the wheat fields, the words came to her, seemingly from just before her faltering feet.

She glanced down. There he stood, a small figure, no taller than a hand's-span, with long hooked nose and goggle eyes, hunched back, protruding chest. Dressed all in brilliant red he was, from tiny pointed shoon to little curve-peaked cap, for all the world an animate replica of the puppet Punchinello she had seen a troupe of jongleurs from Italy present in their play of *Pontius cum Judaeis* at the carnival last Shrove Tuesday. But she recognized him, a *follet*—one of the small goblin-folk of whom her mother and her grandmother had whispered tales; little people who invested fields and forests, coming into human dwellings only stealthily at night, sometimes to bring a boon of money or help the housewife with her work, some-

times, if they were not made welcome, to wreak mischief on their hosts. Harmless little folk they were, not always truly good, but very seldom really bad. The gracious kindly God must tolerate them. She had heard of them since infancy, but never had she seen one, and now she was afraid—terribly afraid. The parish priest had warned her of them. They were truly demons, emissaries of the Arch Fiend's self, bound by a righteous sentence to live until the Day of Judgment, then to be cast with Lucifer the Proud into a lake of everlasting seething brimstone. Meanwhile, anyone who trafficked with them or even failed to drive them off with prayers and invocations to the saints was guilty of a mortal sin; more, whoever saw a spirit would forthwith be stricken dead, or blinded, at the very least.

And so she was afraid. Her small teeth ground together, her insides seemed contracting in upon themselves, her breath was still, every nerve and muscle in her body was as taut as a lute-string while she stood waiting for his next word.

Nor was it slow in coming. "Is there nothing you could ask of life, small mistress mine, no wish which you could name, that you are resolved to quit the good green earth thus suddenly?"

Outraged anger burned the welling tears from Fourchette's eyes. "Aye, that there is, three things, i' sooth, but what can I, a serf and serf's wife, do to gain them?"

"Mayhap," the little fellow wagged his small ungainly head, "mayhap I can accomplish them for you, my little pretty one."

Fourchette remembered tales they told of Claude the miller's son's grandsire. Like Jacques and her he had been but a self-plowman, and like them he had struggled against poverty, want and privation. His crops were filched, his house was wrecked, his only daughter carried off, all "for the service of the seigneur." Then one day as he toiled behind the plow he cried in bitterness of heart, "Oh, if the clod I turn would only show a treasure underneath, enough for us to buy our freedom! The carven saints look on in stony silence when we make our plaint to them; if only the kind Devil——"

From underneath the very clod his plowshare grated through a little man all dight in red rose suddenly, and standing in the furrow asked, "What would you of me, then?"

And straightway, when the plowman told him of his plight the little Red One pointed to the earth, and there the poor serf saw an earthen pot which when he tore its cover off proved to be full of coins, not brass, as were the few groats which the villein saw on rare occasions, not silver such as merchants clinked upon their bancals at the city fairs, but broad gold pieces minted with the signum of St. Louis, enough to buy their freedom from all quit-rents from that day, and with sufficient left to buy the water-mill on which the grandsire and his son and grandson lived in ease and luxury ever since. Folk said that at the end old Claude was snatched alive to hell by a great, fearsome fiend, and that his son died screaming pleas for mercy from a host of demons, seen by him alone, that hunched in deadly menace round his sick-bed. But did not the priests declare that many should be called but few be chosen for salvation? What if one were among the host of the rejected already? Did not old Claude choose wisely? Damned though he was for all eternity, at least he had had ease and comfort in this world, and so did his son after him. Perchance he would have been damned anyway, and if he had rejected the fiend's offer——

THE still, frail voice of the small red-clad man come to her, as from a great distance. "What would you give, my lit-

tle, fair Fourchette, if I could promise you the three things which you crave: revenge on those who have so spitefully entreated you, honor for you and affluence for yourself and husband—behold him, how he toils and moils from sunup to sundown, yet makes no progress. Today the great folk from the château trampled his small patch of garden, killed his milch goat and his kid, broke his ewer and used you for a plaything. How will he pay the quitrent when it falls due? How will he feed you and himself? He can no more. He and you must die of very poverty unless——."

The little voice stopped, but the small topheavy head wagged at her, and the tiny, ugly face smiled knowingly. "We can save him, you and I. We can make him great and powerful, a man feared and respected; we can make you powerful, so that all who displease you shall bite the earth, so that all folk, from the smallest to the greatest, shall fear you. What would you give in return for these things, my little pretty mistress?"

"What can I give—what have I? Our little store of wealth is gone; my body is a shame and a reproach to me; my soul—alas, my soul is burned to ashes in my breast!"

"Nay, little mistress, say not so. Truly, your soul is a small thing, of little worth to you, of none at all to God, else He had not let such things befall you; but to me it is a pretty trinket. Come, give it me, and all that I have named shall be yours, aye, and more too. I will give you things which in your simple innocence you have not conceived of."

"But, little man, you are so wee——"

"Give that which I do crave of you, and you shall see me grow unto my rightful stature. Are you content? Is it a bargain?"

Despite her misery she smiled. This little Puckish fellow, this Hop-o'-my-Thumb whom she could cover with her cupped hand as with a tent . . .

"Great sir, if you will make these gifts to me I am your servant for all time. You shall be my master and my God, and I shall have none other. Gracious to me shall be the light of your countenance, and all your services sweet duties of delight."

"Then down upon the earth and do me reverence. Pledge me your soul for all time and eternity; vow yourself to my service without let or restraint!" The voice of command grew and swelled. Like the diapason of a mighty organ when the stops are opened and the force or harmony turned forth without restraint, it swept through the small, darkened hut until it shook the mud-daubed walls and seemed to raise the rush-thatched roof.

And as the voice enhanced so did the speaker. Like a shadow lengthening in the evening when the sun slants down behind the shoulders of the mountains he magnified until he was as great as a man, an ox, a war-horse—until his head pressed on the ridgepole of the roof and his shoulders hid the wall from sight. Nor was he now the little comic Punchinello with hunched back and ugly good-humored countenance, but a tall and august presence, garbed in red, with a close-fitting coif from which his face looked forth in solemn, awful majesty, unsmiling, but not cruel; sad, but more thoughtful than morose; arrogant and proud, but with a certain look of understanding and compassion in it.

As the awe-inspiring change went forward Fourchette dropped upon her face, and with forehead pressed against the cabin's earthen floor adored him, groveling. She did him homage in accordance with the Templars' rite, naming him her prince, her master and her lord.

He bent and breathed upon her, and his breath was like the rushing of a mighty wind. It burned her like a fire and froze

her like a raging winter tempest at the same time.

She would have shrieked aloud at the agony of it, but her throat was stopped, her tongue was paralyzed; she could neither scream nor speak nor move.

Then, quickly as it came, the torment passed away. She was lying prone upon the cabin floor, alone. There was neither giant fiend nor tiny brownie with her. All was as it had been when she rose to throw herself into the river.

But was it? She glanced toward the bed. It had been broken by the squires' and pages' rowdy play. Now it was whole and sound . . . or had it really been crushed? Her green gown showed no rents, no stains. From the dooryard came a quick, impatient bleat. She ran stumbling from the cabin, and saw before the door the she-goat with the kid beneath her, nursing greedily, its small tail wagging like a reed blown by the wind. Scarcely crediting her senses she rushed to the spring. Safe, whole, and filled with curding milk the pitcher stood in the cool, limpid water. The corn waved in the rising evening breeze. There were no tracks of wanton horses in it.

Fourchette fell on her knees and joined her hands in thanksgiving. It had been a dream, a hideous nightmare. Sir Giulio and his squires and pages had not ridden by, the goat and kid were sound and well, she had not suffered indignity, her soul was still her own. "Praise be to Thee, most gracious, gentle, loving——" she began, and stopped upon the word. She could not call the name of God, however 'hard she sought to frame it.

3. Satan Makes a Payment

PRESENTLY came Jacques home from the field of labor, his face all pale despite his haste, his breath a rasping whistle in his throat, his clumsy wooden sabots clattering on the flints of the pathway.

"Fourchette!" he called, all out of breath so he could scarcely find the power to cry her name. "Fourchette, my little one, my babe, my treasure, are you truly here, and safe?"

She came out to meet him from the cabin, white arms outstretched, bright hair agleam, her eyes alight with joy at his return. "Yea, husband mine, my love, my life, my all," she answered him, "why should I not be here and safe? Know you not I have a mighty champion and protector?"

"Oh, aye," he replied as he gathered her into his arms, "the blessed saints watch over us, but sometimes meseems they nod in their vigil. Guillaume the cotter's wife was set upon by gallants from the seigneurie this afternoon, and so abused that she lies at death's door. His little garden patch was trampled underfoot, his kid and milch-goat slain, and his stone ewer broken by a sportive page. They told me that another party of the gay young gentlemen had come this way . . . oh, Fourchette mine, my heart has been a stone within my breast all day since I heard that. Thou art my love, my life, my breath, my heart's-blood and the light of mine eyes. . . ."

He drew her to him, holding her in his embrace as the dusk enfolds the fruit it guards, and she, her head upon his shoulder, murmured soft, meaningless words, the kind of words women have used since time began for comforting their children—or their men.

FROM the great tower of the château on the hill a bell boomed sonorously, slowly, solemnly, as though it paused to catch its breath and sob with grief between each stroke. One—two—three—nine times its brazen throat cried out its peal of sorrow; a long pause, then another ninefold

chant of woe. Nine tolls marked a man—and ten times nine the passing bell had tolled before the little cavalcade splashed through the brook and mounted the steep roadway leading to the castle, torchlight reddening the harness of the men-at-arms and casting fearful, creeping shadows on the grassed land by the roadway.

Jacques ran down to the water-ford and hailed a varlet who led a pack animal. The load the beast bore was wrapped round in a long winding-sheet of linen, and through the whiteness of the fabric showed the stain of fresh-spilt blood. "What passes, Héraclide?" he called.

"Alas, it is the good Sir Giulio de Lac, and Messires Ormond and Pindare—they and their company of seven other pages and esquires were set upon by the thrice-cursed Patrinonnes as they rode through the wildwood, and cut down to a man. May God have pity on their souls, and on the souls of all good Christians!"

"Amen," responded Jacques, and signed himself with the Cross.

Jacques was long at his devotions that night, giving thanks that he and his had been spared the cruel fate of Guillaume the cotter and his wife, thanks that his humble home still stood intact, especially that he still had Fourchette in her beauty and sweet innocency.

Her prayer was brief but heartfelt as she knelt beside the crude bedstead before she crept between the coarse flax sheets and into Jacques' embrace: *"Tenez, Messire le Diable,* if so be we have made a pact I thank thee for the earnest-money thou hast paid. Thy full requital on thy bond shall be made when thou makest demand. Meantime, thou shalt pay through the nose. Amen."

4. Wealth, Health and Happiness

CONSTERNATION reigned throughout the Pays de la Montagne; the seigneur had declared his quit-rents must be paid in money, not in kind. Never in the memory of a living man had such a thing been asked, for to the wretched serfs who tilled the fields and worked the roads, drew water and hewed wood one day—and sometimes two—in every three in their lord's service the sight of a brass farthing was rarer than a glimpse at a blue moon. Many passed their whole lives without ever handling a coin. How should they obtain cash now to meet their lord's demands? Geese, hens, sheep, goats and even cows were driven to the town for sale, the peasants stripped their poor homes of the barest rudiments of comfort to raise the pelf for their quit-rents.

Jacques was in despair. All year he'd toiled to save enough to buy two stools and a bancal for their home. Now not only must he toss this little hoard of copper on the checkered table of the seigneur's steward, the sheep must go to the money-changers, and the goat and kid as well; perhaps also their little brood of chickens and their hive of bees. Then wherewith should they feed themselves when icy winter came?

Fourchette smiled confidently. "He who watches over us will surely see we are not left in desolation," she encouraged. And when he asked her how it was she put such faith in the saints who maugre prayers and entreaties had made no move to help Guillaume the cotter's wife when she was sore beset, she only smiled the more and kissed him and replied, "You will see!"

And see they did. One week before the rent fell due, as Jacques was laboring in the field his mattock clinked on metal as he struck it in the earth, and there before his startled eyes was a small iron casket, brimful of silver angels; enough to pay his quit-rents for a five-year term, with something over to lend poor Guillaume the cotter, who had nothing left to put in pawn to raise the rent the lord demanded.

Their fortunes grew apace. Fourchette went to the market town each handsel day, at first with a few eggs and a cast of wheaten bread in a small wicker hanaper, later with a flock of chickens and a pile of fresh-spun woolen yarn, and always the best trade was hers. Buyers seemed to come to her instinctively and she sold at any price she chose to ask, nor was there any bickering.

When Jean the cobbler, long collector of the seigneur's moneys from the peasants, was caught red-handed in a defalcation and summarily hanged by the neck, the seigneur cast about for his successor, and elected Jacques to sit beneath the feudal tree each Saturday and settle accounts with the little folk. Surely, reasoned Sire Raymond, a man who can lay by a store of sixteen silver angels in a single year, and on a daily wage of nothing, would be the very one to squeeze the last groat from the farmerers and crofters.

Fourchette's heart swelled with pride. Her Jacques, but yesterday a grubber in the fields, was now a little lord in his own right, sitting—sometimes harshly—in judgment upon the very men who aforetime had looked down on him because he had but a few sheep and some goats while they had cows and even horses in their stables.

But they were lonely in their new grandeur. The neighbors louted low to them when they passed by, but they were avoided and shunned. At first they felt a thrill of pride at this, but soon the isolation of their station saddened them. The castle gentry scorned and hated them, especially Fourchette. Somehow the story of the visit of Sir Giulio and the squires and pages to her house—and the fate that overtook them afterward—leaked out, and while they feared to offend her lest misfortune strike them, too, they named her witch and devil's-mistress in private. Their former gossips held no traffic with them—when has the tax-collector ever had a friend? Their only safety lay in the lord's favor, and this was measured strictly by the money they leeched from the peasants for him. So, between the hatred of the serfs and suspicion of the gentry they lived hemmed in by dangers in the midst of awful loneliness.

5. Three Golden Hairs—Three Hundred Golden Leopards

"I TELL thee, man, thou must raise it!" Sire Raymond de la Montagne glowered at the cowering Jacques. "Silver will no longer serve, I must have gold, two hundred golden leopards, and by this day fortnight." Sire Raymond meant to make a brave show when he joined the King to drive the English back into the sea. He must have fine weapons from Damasco, horses of pure Arab blood, arms and armor for his men-at-arms and a silk tent for his own use when camp was made. Such luxuries were not to be had in all France, but they could be bought in Outremer by those who had the price, and for the price he needed gold, not silver.

"But, good my lord," the wretched Jacques pleaded, "where am I to find gold? Have I an army which can raid it from the Flemish cities—where am I to dig the earth to find its treasures?"

Sire Raymond looked at him, and there was little friendship in his glance. "See thou to it," he replied. "Mayhap the place where you found silver to pay five years' quit-rent in advance will yield another hoard. But comes it from the peasantry or Jews, or from the Devil's coffers, I will have the sum of two hundred gold leopards, or"—he glanced up at the battlements—"you see yon embrasure? The rope you may not see, but it is ready. Lay in my hand two hundred golden leopards ere the fortnight passes, or by'r Lady thou shalt dangle out of one at the other's end.

Make thy choice and go thy ways, my Jacques."

ABARBANEL the banker squatted on the floor of his counting-house. His cap was jammed awry upon his head, covering one ear, leaving a patch of white hairless scalp exposed upon the other side; his gabardine was ripped to tatters, his plaited gray beard stained with blood. When he put trembling hands up to his cheeks as he rocked to and fro, blood welled from crushed fingertips. *"Oi!"* he murmured miserably. *"Oi, oi, oi!"*

A knocking at the door aroused him for a moment, but he sank back, keening, on his haunches as the portal swung back and a woman entered. With rheumy, lackluster eyes he looked at her. From crown to heel she was enveloped in a hooded cloak of rough green stuff; he could not say if she were young or old, base-born or noble, he knew only that from the shadow of her updrawn camail her eyes burned at him like twin points of blue flame, and that something feverish had seemed to come into the room with her.

He felt a sudden fear. Two hours since the armed men of the count had gone away, but—the chilly little fireless room seemed stifling with a sudden heat—even their rough cruelty had been less frightening than this woman who stood glare-eyed like Medea of the heathen fable. . . . "What would ye of me, Lady?"

"Two hundred golden leopards, upon such usury as you may name!"

"Two hundred leopards!" He looked at her in dismay. "How should I have so much, or even one-tenth of it? Behold my empty, bleeding gums. The soldiers of the count have just been here, and jerked my teeth out one by one to force me to disclose the hiding-place of my gold—*oi!* See my maimed hands. They laid my fingertips between hewn boards and jumped on them until the blood burst forth as it had been tears shed from grieving eyes, but . . . think ye I could have withstood such torment if I had a store of hidden gold to buy them off?"

"Yea, that do I," she answered simply. 'I know your breed, good Jew; I know that only in the might of gold can you and yours find protection. I know full well that rather than consign your wife and children to a life of penury you would let them tear you limb from shuddering limb with red-hot pincers, and keep silent."

She let the capote of her cloak fall back, and down around her shoulders spilled a cataract of what seemed minted gold, so bright and yellow was her hair. "Behold, good usurer, if you will let me have the loan I crave, I'll pay you back with interest of a half-part, and"—the glare in her eyes was intolerably bright—"those who tormented you shall die the death ere they have reached the count his castle's barbican."

"How? Will you strike them with a curse, Milady?"

She drew a little phial from her dress, set her teeth in the cork and opened it, then poured a scruple of black liquid in her cupped palm. "Look, Jew," she ordered as she held her hand out to him. "Gaze into yon pool and tell me what it is you see."

The inky liquid seemed to cloud with gray, as though a drop of cream had been spilled in it; then it boiled suddenly, and from it came a little puff of acrid steam that stung his eyes until they watered, but through the tears he seemed to look down a long vista at the end of which a wooden bridge was swung across a torrent which ran howling through a rocky gorge. He saw a little troop of horsemen clatter out upon the bridge, and at their head he saw Hans Peter, captain of the count's Swiss mercenaries, at whose orders his teeth had been plucked out as a child or lover plucks the petals from a daisy when he seeks to

know his fortune. He saw the cavalcade ride to the center of the bridge, saw the stout timbering of the causeway break as if it had been reeds beneath the weight of the mailed hooves, saw men and horses tumble through the wreckage to the rocks that seemed to gnash like teeth of a voracious maw. . . .

"Are you satisfied, good usurer?" he heard the lady's mocking voice.

"Nay, Lady, what I saw may have been sooth, or may have been a wish which took on seeming as I gazed into the liquor," he answered cautiously. "How shall I know Hans Peter and his fell crew perished thus?"

She smiled—a thin, slow smile. "Before the horologe upon the Town House sounds the curfew you will have confirmation of your vision, Jew," she told him. "If it cometh not, forget I ever asked a loan of you, but if it comes, bring you the gold to Jacques the steward's house within the hour, and you shall have repayment with full usury before a fortnight passeth."

THE tale of how the count's men perished stem and branch when the bridge crashed under them was bruited through the city streets that evening, and shortly after sunset Abarbanel came to Jacques' house with two hundred golden leopards. "What will you give in pledge of payment, Lady mine?" he asked Fourchette as he put the metal in her hands.

She smiled on him again, and he felt little chills of terror chase small thrills of fright up his spine as she pulled three hairs from her head, knotted them together, and dropped them in his open palm. "Put them in your strong box, usurer," she bade, "and at the hour of sundown this day sevennight open the casket and see what you shall see."

Grumbling he shuffled back to his house. Too late for regrets now, she had the money . . . but she had shown him how Hans Peter and the count's men died, perhaps . . . he was a fool to trust such things, but he would put the three hairs in his strong box. . . .

The sun had scarce had time to sink behind the gambreled roofs when, one week later, he rushed to his treasure chest, undid its fourteen locks and flung the lid back. Where three golden hairs had rested on the notes of hand and foreign bills of exchange were now three piles of golden coins, three hundred leopards minted with the sign of English Edward's majesty—his loan repaid with half again the principal for usury.

6. ". . . and an Haughty Spirit Before Destruction"

FOURCHETTE had been a pretty girl, but with maturing womanhood she flowered royally. Her dazzling fairness was always set off by a gown of green, her wondrous hair was plaited in two long, full braids that fell below her knees; she wore bracelets of fine gold on either wrist and round her neck a chain of beaten gold as heavy as a fetter. Men marveled at her fascination and admired and obeyed her without question. She was a woman of fire, her face was a pale flame, her eyes blue lightning-flashes, her speech a shower of scintillating sparks. As by a miracle Abarbanel the usurer had become open-handed.

Tight-fisted, grasping, holding out for ruinously high interest with all others, he lent money in whatever sum she asked without demur. She it was, and she alone, who kept the château solvent by her credit with the Jewish banker. No demand the seigneur made was too fantastic, he needed but to voice his wants and straightway she supplied them. Nor—miracle of miracles!—did Abarbanel ever press for payment; indeed, the only thing that seemed to give him greater pleasure than

renewing an old loan was making fresh advances.

Sire Raymond had gone to the English wars, and with him rode his might of knights and squires and men-at-arms. In his absence the Lady Iseult, chatelain of the castle, ruled his house and lands and people, and: "I will have naught of this Jacques jackanapes and his proud upstart wife," quoth she. "Too long my lord has let them have their high and mighty way, collecting rents and tribute-moneys from our people, factoring loans from usurers, and holding back a noble portion of the whole for their own behoof. Henceforth I will be both reeve and bailiff, overseer and collector."

So Jacques was driven from his seat beneath the feudal tree and the proud Lady Iseult took his place upon the bancal to receive the seigneur's moneys. But however nobly born she be, a woman is a woman still, and the tenants slacked in payment of their rents, and presently the harvests failed, and the English took Sire Raymond captive and held him for a mighty ransom, and when the lady chatelain approached Abarbanel with demands for a loan, he would not let her have a groat until he had an earnest-payment on the principal and interest which was long past due. They resorted to the mild persuasions of the times, and then he swore he was a ruined man with only a few pence laid by to feed his starving wife and children, and persisted in this stubbornness until he fainted three times under torment. So, at her wits' end for the necessary metal, the Lady Iseult left him swooning on the floor, applied the torch to his house and in no highly Christian temper called upon Fourchette.

Not as villein-wife to her lady, nor as equal to an equal, but as superior to suppliant Fourchette received the Lady Iseult. She kept her waiting in the chilly common room for more than half an hour, and when she finally appeared made no obeisance to her noble visitor, but addressed her coldly, almost with contempt. "I know full well you come to me because all other means have failed you, Milady. You are hard-pressed for money, and in desperate case. Hear, then the terms on which I will relieve you: My man shall be restored to his reeveship, but with authority to collect moneys from the gentle, as well as the base-born, and for his service he shall have the third, no longer a fourth merely, of the moneys he collects. Whenever business calls him to the château all shall do him honor, from the highest to the lowest, and at his approach the horns shall blow and all the castle guard turn out. Me you shall greet with gentle courtesy, and all your people, from belted knight to scullery lad, shall lout low at my coming. These be my terms, Milady, and not for less will I procure thee one stiver."

The Lady Iseult ground her teeth in rage, but poverty takes no denial, and her need was very great. So she curtsied low to Fourchette, as to a bishop or a princess, and went her ways in silent anger.

Next day five thousand silver pounds were paid in her hand by Abarbanel the usurer.

7. *A Doctrinal Discussion*

THEY made high holiday at the château, for Sire Raymond, ransomed from the English, had come again to his own place. Above the common table where the squires and men-at-arms were seated rose the seigneur's board, and on it were heaped brimming platters of roast meat and fowl, fish, comfits, sweetmeats and marchpane, while the pages passed from bench to bench with silver flagons of strong, heady wine.

Beside the Lady Iseult sat her chaplain Frère Ambroise, and by him Frey Tomás de Astorga, fresh from Prague and Cologne, where his zeal as Grand Inquisitor

had spread terror and dismay in every witches' coven between the Rhine and Elbe. "Meseemeth thy shrewd powers might be used to good purpose in this our city, good Father," Lady Iseult told the dour Spaniard. "There walks one amongst us who might merit thy investigation. But five years since she was a serf's wife, toiling for her keep like any of her kind, but suddenly she blossomed forth with sudden wealth, and since that day the times make fair for her. Does any lack for gold? Only through her may the Jewish banker be approached; to others he turns a deaf ear—myself have been denied a paltry loan by him—but at her word he opens up his coffers and disgorges precious metal as if it had been brass or copper. When others' crops failed in the blight her corn and vines bore bounteously; when the black death stalked our towns and countryside she walked forth unafraid and unscathed; yea, though the best and holiest of all our folk were smitten by the plague."

"They say she never goeth to the minster," added Frère Ambroise. "'Tis true she is reputed to give much to help the parish poor——"

"The poor we have with us always," Frey Tomás interrupted. "Did not the blessed Master say as much—aye, and scornfully rebuke those who would have had Mary Magdalene's embrocation sold to buy bread for them?" He helped himself to a fresh portion of spiced ox-tongue. "It is no work of merit to give bread unto the hungry. If it were heaven's will that all men should be fed, then we should have no poor, but it is stated explicitly that the poor we shall have with us always. Methinks it might be judged defiance of divine purpose to alleviate their condition. If heaven had not willed that they be poor, then they would not be poor; but since their poverty is obviously by divine decree, whoso maketh them less poor, even though it be by giving them no more than a dry crust, thwarts heaven's will, and is therefore no better than a heretic. And since all witchcraft is a species of heresy, it follows as the night the day that heresy is also a form of witchcraft, and Holy Scripture saith expressly, 'Thou shalt not suffer any witch to live.' *Dixi.*"

Frère Ambroise scooped a ladleful of stewed lamprey into his platter, sampled it, and found it vastly to his taste. "'Tis a dreadful thing to contemplate the progress which the Devil maketh," he said piously, speaking somewhat thickly, for his mouth was overful with victual. "Since the scandals of the Templars were exposed, 'tis hard to say in what guise Satan will next manifest himself. Against him and his servants only one thing avails, the stake."

Frey Tomás gulped a cup of wine. It was not as good as his own native sherris, but 'twould pass. "Excellently spoken, reverend sir," he agreed. "Thou sayest very well, indeed; but in our work among the wizards of the Reich and Bohemia we found that the stake itself is not always sufficient. Were it not better that the erring soul be purified and purged by fasting, contemplation and mild discipline for a time, so that at last, although the body be destroyed by fire, the better and immortal part be saved? To burn the adjudged witch or warlock is indeed needful, but if the sinner be burnt in his unrepentant pride he well may go in seeming triumph to the stake, and thus set a bad example to the people."

He beamed with Christian love upon the Lady Iseult. "If you, Milady, in the goodness of your heart would undertake the task of working on our erring sister's stubborn heart, setting her for some few years in a sweet retreat to which you only had the key, you might by proper loving adjuration and the imposition of indulgent discipline bring her to a state of grace, so that, chastened, meek and humble, she

might at last shame the Foul Fiend and go rejoicing to the stake, a ransomed soul."

"Perhaps"—the Lady Iseult had not thought of this before—"perhaps my lord would not consent. He is somewhat beholden to the witch-wife."

"He must consent, Milady." Thus the chaplain. "If the woman truly be a witch—and good Frey Tomás who is expert in such matters tells us that she doubtless is—why, then, it is his duty to consent. For the sake of his good, lawful vassals who have had no traffic with the Evil One, and for all the countryside, it is his duty to have her delivered up for trial."

"But alas, we have no court ecclesiastical to hear her case," the Lady Iseult objected. "Where shall we find a warrant for her apprehension——"

Frey Tomás answered soothingly. He was a man of law as well as of God, and knew his way among the mazes of juridical procedure. "If the erring sister be put in restraints—of the proper sort—and kept in peaceful contemplation for a time, her better nature will at length assert itself, and she will gladly make confession of her error and denounce herself as one of those who has had dealings with the Arch Fiend. Then there will be no warrant necessary. Self-confessed and self-accused, she may be brought before the Prince Bishop for instant sentence and delivered to the secular arm and the purifying fire without delay."

8. The Cage Is Prepared

SIRE RAYMOND rode out hawking the next morning, and in his absence Lady Iseult had a busy day. In the ambulatory between the barbican and inner wall of the château was an old well, not used since the great cistern had been dug in the forecourt, and thither Lady Iseult and her stone mason and his varlets repaired. The well was housed in a small lodge of stone, but there was light enough to permit work. At Milady's orders they set a strong iron grille across the well's base, a foot or so above the water level, strung an iron dipper by a strong chain to the grating, then proceeded to erect a vaulted dome over the well top, taking care to leave a two-foot hole in it. In this they hinged an iron cover and secured it with a massive lock and hasp. So well the caitiffs worked at Lady Iseult's urging that the sun was but four hours past the prime when all was done. Then Milady had compassion on the mason and his crew, and bade them come into the hall and cool their gullets with a stoup of wine.

The drink was slightly bitter, but a dusty throat excuses lack of flavor, and so they drank not one, but several cups. After that it remained but to bury them in a convenient trench, for the venom in the wine was very potent, and they all died quickly, though not painlessly.

FOURCHETTE was very happy. Five years and more had sped since she made her compact with the Evil One, and they had been good years, full years, years packed with peace and plenty. Now came power. The Lady Iseult, albeit with bad grace, had restored Jacques to place and favor, he was treated like a grandee when he went to the castle, and even she, Fourchette the villein's wife, a mere serf of the body, was entreated courteously, knights and squires doffing their headgear in her presence, lesser folk genuflecting as to a lady born when she passed by. Her status was assured. With the wealth of Abarbanel to back her and the power that money gives within her hand she had no longer any need of Satan, or his aid. Tomorrow she would seek the parish priest and make confession of her error, submit to such penance as he chose to inflict—be sure, Fourchette, it will not be a heavy one when you declare your intention of a gift sufficient to build a new church and fur-

nish it with painted windows and a silver reliquary set with gold and precious jewels! —then, once again a Christian in good standing, she would take her place among the elect of the town.

Poor Satan! She had used him shabbily. He had kept his bargain to the letter; all her enemies had perished miserably, she who had been a serf and villein's mate was now become a great lady. Almost she could feel it in her heart to pity him . . . but he was such a fool . . . why should one keep her compact with the Devil when she might have all that he offered, and give nothing in return?

Hark! What was that clamor at the door? A sudden gust of roaring tempest? How the stout oak panels shook! The iron staves that held the portal fast seemed bending under a tremendous force! Could it be a mob collected, bent on sacking this fine house of hers? They would not dare —all knew how any who offended her met quick misfortune. . . .

"Ha, Jezebel, foul witch, vile myrmidon of Satan; we have thee!" The groined roof echoed to the pounding of mailed feet, the firelight flashed on sword and partizan and ax. They pounced upon her like hounds on the fox when he is run to earth. Hemp chafed her tender wrists, a soldier knocked her two-horned bonnet off and spurned it wih his foot; another snatched the golden chain from round her neck. A dreadful, searing pain against her face—another—they had torn the long gold pendants from her ears, dragging flesh and gold away together. A page-boy darted from the mass of men-at-arms and with his dagger slit her fine green robe from waist to hem. Two other half-grown lads rushed up, long dog-whips in their hands, and swift and pitilessly fell the whistling lashes. Her bodice had been ripped away and red, thick welts formed on her tortured back, while all the noble company laughed in high glee as she fell shuddering to the floor. But the pages whipped her up again.

"On thy feet, witch! Would you make us carry thee to thine abiding-place?"

Before the Lady Iseult's feet Fourchette knelt down upon her knees and bowed her head in all humility. "I do beseech your Ladyship to grant me boon of covering. Do not, I prithee, drag me forth into the streets all naked."

A square of sacking, foul with stable-soil, was brought and draped about her lash-marked, trembling shoulders. " 'Twill be enough for thee, witch-wife; there'll be small need of dainty raiment in the place to which thou goest!"

9. Fourchette's Lace

THE blackness of the dungeon was so absolute she could discern no difference between open and closed eyes. If she stood in the center of the grating she could touch the stone walls of her prison each side with her out-stretched hands, nor did she need to hold her arms full-length to do it. *If* she stood on the grating . . . but she could not. The roof was too low to permit her to stand upright, and though she was a little woman she could not lie full-length in her cell. Sitting was the only natural posture she could assume; she could neither lie stretched out to sleep nor stand erect to ease her cramping muscles, and the blackness . . . the unutterable, inky blackness! She felt as if she smothered, it was pressing in on her like something solid; so she screamed and beat her head against the stones until she swooned, and when she came to it was still around her, crowding, bearing down upon her, suffocating her with its solidity.

She realized where they had put her. It was an oubliette, a forgetress, an *in pace*—for such they humorously called the lightless, almost airless dungeons where the living dead were immolated to go slowly

mad if they were luckless, or find quick oblivion and surcease in insanity if fortune favored them.

Creeping across the grating with exploring hands she found the chain to which the dipper swung. Pulling it up from the brackish water, she drank. It was foul and slime-scummed, but it eased her throat, rasped raw with futile screaming, and she drank and drank again. How long had she been there? She had fainted when they brought her to the château and informed her she must spend a term *in pace* and would be released on one condition, that she own herself a witch and go forthwith to the stake. When she came to, she had been here—how long? Time stands still in utter darkness; she might have lain there for a day, a week—no, if she had been there so long she would feel the pangs of hunger, for she had not eaten. . . . She crawled across the grating on bruised hands and knees again. What was that her fingers touched? Something cold and sleek and greasy. She recoiled in horror from the loathsome thing; it felt like dead flesh.

She raised her fingers to her face, smelled them. It was flesh. Roast meat. And she was hungry, ravenous. Wolfishly she gnawed the bone, worrying it until no scrap of meat was left on it. Then, replete with food, she slept.

A LITTLE light shone in the darkness. No, it was not light, it was a blacker blackness, the dim outlines of a form more solid than the solid gloom of the unchanging night that filled her dungeon. "Fourchette!" The voice was soft and musical; a little sad, a little mocking.

"Yea, lord!" She recognized it, though she had not heard it since that day in her unwindowed cabin when she made her pact with hell.

"You are in evil case, my little one."

"I be in evil case, great sir, but I have no one but myself to blame. Had I not considered cheating thee——"

His almost soundless mocking laughter silenced her. "What would you give to be freed from this place?"

"Alackaday, great sir, what have I left to give? My body and my soul are thine already——"

"Yea, that I know full well. You have erred and strayed from my ways like a lost sheep, and are no more worthy to be called my bride, but I have pity on you for the service you have done me aforetime. Pluck out ten hairs from your head and weave them into a spider-web. It will not be an easy task, and many times you'll fail at it, but if you persist you will come at last to success. When at last the work is done and a web woven to my liking—then we shall see what we shall see. Farewell awhile, Fourchette."

Furiously she plucked the hairs from her head, eagerly she set to work to fashion them into the pattern of a spider-web. In the blackness of the dungeon she could not see what she did; before she'd worked for half a minute she had snarled the strands past hope of disentanglement. Ten more hairs, a quarter-hour's work in blindness, another hopeless snarl. Still she persisted, pulling hair on hair, starting each new piece of work in high hope, ending in despair as black as the air of her dungeon.

UP ON the bright green earth where sunrise followed sunset and season took the place of season four years passed into eternity. In the lightless dungeon where Fourchette toiled endlessly, four times four thousand years seemed to have passed. But she took no count of time, for time had long since ceased for her. Work, sleep, eat rotting meat when it was thrown to her, drink foul, stinking water from the dipper chained to the grating—that was her program, and it varied not at all from one year's end to another's. She

was almost wholly bald, for hair on glowing golden hair had been snatched out for her weaving, yet always, soon or late, she spoiled the work. Three times a week the Lady Iseult came to the dungeon, undid the heavy lock which held the iron cover in place, and dropped a chunk of rotting meat into the cell. "Are you ready to confess your sin and go to the stake now, witch-wife?" she called each time she threw the stinking food down. But there was never an answer. In the darkness she could descry Fourchette bent at work, but Fourchette did not see her. Like one possessed she wove and knotted hairs into the pattern of a spider-web, and long ago her optic nerves had atrophied. Light and darkness were all one to her.

At last she sank back on her haunches, smiling in the blackness. A perfect web had been constructed, free of tangles, knots and snarls. "The work is done, great sir," she murmured. "Your handmaiden awaits your judgment."

She felt his touch upon her hairless head. A sudden fiery thrill ran through her, followed by an icy chill. Somehow, she had changed, but how she did not know. She knew only that the dungeon seemed to have expanded mightily; it was vast as a great castle, and—she could run up its smooth sides as easily as she could creep across the grating of its floor. Also, for the first time in so many years she could not count them, she could see a little—not very well, but still a little. She could make out the joints in the masonry, and they seemed as wide as highways. Slight irregularities in the squaring of the stones now seemed like hillocks to her. Had the dungeon really grown to giant size, or had she shrunk until she was no larger than the little faery folk who spun their dainty cloths by moonlight?

"THE time is come, Milady," Chaplain Ambroise said. "Let us fetch our erring sister from her place of contemplation and repentance. Tomorrow the Prince Bishop burns a hundred witches and warlocks, minus one. It would be a dainty gesture for us to complete the tale and make an even hundred *penitentes* for the auto da fé."

They ringed about the dungeon entrance with their swords and partizans as if they had come out to take some savage beast or strong and fearsome robber instead of one weak woman—and her blind.

"By'r Lakin!" cried a soldier as they threw the dungeon cover back. He struck at something with his pike-blade, missed it, and crossed himself with more piety than he'd shown in many a day.

"What was it, Jouffroy?" asked the Lady Iseult.

"Naught but a spider, Milady. It must have made its dwelling in the dungeon with the witch-wife, and been frightened by the sudden light. Folk say their bites are poisonous——"

"Spider me no spiders, varlet. Get thee down in yonder hole and drag me out the foul witch."

But though the soldier Jouffroy searched right diligently, and others after him, they found no trace of Fourchette.

And what became of her nobody ever knew.

The Lady Iseult's holiday was spoilt completely. She had promised the Prince Bishop one more witch to burn, and she could not make good her promise.

Perhaps this is significant: In that part of France which was once the ancient Pays de la Montagne the peasants call a cobweb jeweled with morning dew *"la dentelle de Fourchette"*—Fourchette's lace.

Slaves of the Gray Mold

By THORP McCLUSKY

An inexpressibly weird tale, about the parasitic gray mold from outer space that menaced our world with horror unthinkable

1. The Man with the Briefcase

DETECTIVE - LIEUTENANT PETERS, like many other men, believed in the motorman's holiday. On the rare days and half-days he was privileged to call his own he invariably proceeded, dressed in his newest suit, by leisurely stages to that teeming district, bounded on the east by the miasmatic river and on the south by the financial district, where in years past he had walked the pavement and wielded a nightstick.

This was his happiest form of recreation. And on this particular Friday morning he was in a more than usually happy mood; it was a very clear day, and he had only recently breakfasted on griddle cakes and sausages, served in Maggie's own inimitable way with tremendous drenchings of maple syrup.

It was approximately ten-thirty in the morning. . . .

Not a day on which one might expect anything outré to occur; yet before Peters, after emerging from the subway, had gone half a block he witnessed an incident so unusual, and containing inherent peculiarities so interesting, that he determined to follow it to its ultimate conclusion.

A gray-haired, sprightly-walking man, who carried in his right hand a briefcase, had emerged from the dignified portal of a brokerage house and was walking down the street. He was passing, halfway down the block, a low granite wall that enclosed an ancient churchyard and the old gray-stone church that had successfully resisted the encroachments of the surrounding Babylon. Half a dozen human derelicts, ragged, thin-faced wretches, lounged in various attitudes of dejection against the wall.

The man carrying the briefcase had passed all but the last man.

Although he could not see that man's eyes, Peters knew with intuitive certainty that he had looked up intently at the man with the briefcase.

The man with the briefcase had passed the wall, but now he stopped abruptly. Turning, he retraced his steps to the man lounging at the end of the wall, put the briefcase down on the broad low granite, and walked quickly away in the direction from which he had come. As he passed Peters, the Detective-Lieutenant glimpsed his face. He was frowning slightly, as though deep in thought.

The nondescript derelict at the end of the wall picked up the briefcase and calmly continued along the street in the direction its first bearer had originally taken!

Peters, perplexed, stopped midway along the fence. Apparently no other person had witnessed the incident. Of course, it might all have been entirely harmless, Peters knew. Perhaps the briefcase contained clean shirts and underwear—odds and ends donated by a worthy member of a family to one not so worthy, one whose very appearance was obviously embarrassing.

There might be countless explanations. Yet there was an unnaturalness in all this that struck Peters as strange. . . .

"There was a curious vague fixedness in her stare."

He made up his mind quickly. He could always locate bearer number one; he would follow bearer number two.

The man strode along rapidly, without so much as a backward glance. Obviously he was proceeding toward some definite destination, for he crossed two street intersections without pause, turned up abruptly to the right, and then commenced attentively studying the numbers on the buildings he passed. Midway in the block he turned, without hesitation, into an entrance lobby.

Peters, thoroughly intrigued, followed, and unobtrusively watched the man scrutinize the building directory. Both men moved toward the elevator.

ON the twenty-fourth floor the briefcase-bearer got off, and proceeded to the offices of Paige, Dean & Wentworth, private bankers. Peters, after a discreet interval, followed the man into the office foyer.

Here, despite the number of obviously important callers who waited, the derelict was nowhere in evidence. Superficially everything seemed serene, and yet Peters

sensed agitation in the face of the receptionist.

He went directly to the girl.

"Where did that man go—the man who just preceded me?"

The girl would have evaded the question, but a flash of Peters' badge momentarily confused her.

"Mr. Paige—oh, it's so fortunate! Mr. Beach only just lost those securities somewhere on the street, and this man found them almost at once and brought them directly here."

"I want to see Mr. Paige—at once."

Her fingers trembling, the girl communicated with the partner.

"Lieutenant Peters of the Homicide Division of the Detective Bureau," Peters said grimly. "Tell him to try that on his zither."

Mr. Paige occupied a corner office, a very large room, walnut-paneled and furnished with that studied ignoring of every evidence of crass commerce many executives now affect. Except for a gigantic rosewood desk set in the angle between the windows, this room was in every other detail like an extremely luxurious living-room. Two large ship models were conspicuously displayed; several fine paintings hung on the walls. A small coal fire burned in a tremendous fireplace.

As Peters entered, Mr. Paige, small, sparse, with bushy eyebrows, looked up questioningly. Peters saw the briefcase, open on the rosewood desk, and, seated before the desk, the pitiably clothed creature who had returned it.

Mr. Paige spoke in a thin, irritable voice.

"Sit down, Lieutenant Peters. Will you be good enough to explain your—imperious message?"

Peters looked frankly at Paige.

"This man here just brought you a briefcaseful of securities. I chanced to witness the manner by which he came in possession of them, and I followed him here. Those securities were, in my opinion, intentionally placed within his reach by the messenger who originally set out to bring them here. Collusion, probably in the hope of a reward, is obviously indicated."

Paige looked startled, and frankly unbelieving. For a moment he sat in deep thought, then slowly shook his head.

"Lieutenant," he said gravely, all trace of his former irritation gone, "permit me to commend you upon your alertness. Except for one extremely pertinent fact I would certainly agree with you. The truth, which makes collusion impossible, is, that the securities in this briefcase were in the possession of the man, Mr. Beach of Webber & Beach, who lost them. He only telephoned me a moment ago, in great confusion, that he had suffered a brief attack of amnesia while on his way here, and that he must have put them down somewhere. He was about to call the police, but I was able to tell him that the securities had already been safely delivered by this man. I fear Mr. Beach has been working too hard.

"At any rate, he instructed me to send the man back to him, with the promise that work, if he desires work, within his capacities will be found there for him. And on my part I am going to reward this man's honesty with a small cash gift. Mr. Beach is very closely associated with us.

"So, Lieutenant Peters, you see that the matter quite simply explains itself. Many thanks, and if you will excuse us——"

2. The Horror in the Eyes

PETERS, leaving the offices of Paige, Dean & Wentworth, did not immediately enter the elevator. He waited, instead, for a word with the lucky derelict whom Mr. Paige was doubtless at this very moment filling to the brim with platitudes, climaxed by a sheaf of bills. Of course,

as Peters well knew, the sane thing to do would be to take the common-sense attitude and go along about his business. Quite candidly Peters admitted to himself that Mr. Beach could not well be mad enough to attempt to defraud himself. Yet Peters could not stifle his conviction that there had been some sort of silent communication between Beach and the derelict, beside that low granite wall.

Well, maybe it was all an over-active imagination. Peters turned toward the elevator. And in that instant the nondescript derelict himself came from the offices of Paige, Dean & Wentworth, and abruptly Peters decided he would have a word with the man. He took a step forward.

"Just a minute, you—" he rasped, his voice file-thin.

The man lifted his eyes to Peters' face. Peters gained the impression that they were blue eyes, faded and somewhat watery. And then Peters shrank against the steel-casemented window in paralyzed horror.

As though sprouting from *within* the eyeballs themselves, a downy *fuzz* of about the color of milkweed had abruptly spread over pupils, irises, and corneas. Having somewhat the appearance of cataract, it was not cataract.

It was a distinct growth, ciliated and finer than the finest eiderdown, so fine that it seemed to sprout through lens and integument without affecting even a single cell.

The man's eyes had suddenly become unhuman, fuzz-covered spheres! And the horror of it was that the fuzz on the surface of those spheres was alive, was studying Peters, was looking at him!

And then power, weird, alien power, radiating from those twin orbs in tangible, hurtling waves, crashed into Peters' brain with the devastating force of some titanic sledgehammer.

3. What Horror Walks the Streets?

AS THOUGH from an incredible distance Peters heard the confused honking of automobile horns. Then, like the swift lifting of a mighty curtain, complete awareness returned to him.

He gazed about in stupefied amazement. For he was far uptown, within a few blocks of his home. Apparently, if this strange mental oblivion had endured a few moments longer he would have returned home!

Home, to Peters, was the greatest, strongest influence in life; just as, perhaps, his brokers' office had been paramount in the soul of Cornelius Beach.

Peters, his forehead corrugated with deep thought, retarded his pace. His first conscious effort to unravel the mystery into which he had stumbled was to look at his watch.

It was twelve twenty-three. An hour had elapsed since that hideous experience on the twenty-fourth floor of a downtown office building.

Almost mechanically Peters turned into a drugstore and put in a telephone call to the offices of Webber & Beach. After identifying himself he talked for a few moments with Mr. Beach. The partner, replying to Peters' questions, seemed oddly evasive, oddly hesitating, peculiarly anxious to treat the matter as lightly as possible.

It was almost as though he was afraid for his own sanity! Yet he answered Peters' routine questions candidly enough.

The man who had returned the briefcase had given Mr. Paige the name of Jimmie Dunn. Yes, Mr. Paige had given him a sizable cash reward. He had not appeared at Webber & Beach to claim the position Mr. Beach had offered.

Slowly Peters hung up the phone and turned from the drugstore. And in that instant a problem occurred to him—a

problem so weird, so bizarre that it sent little crinkling shivers racing along his spine.

Dunn, Peters knew, had never once opened, or attempted to open, the leather briefcase. How, then, had Dunn *known* to whom the enclosed securities were addressed?

What horror that could read a message through a briefcase's leather, that could paralyze a man with a glance, was walking the streets?

4. The Long Shots Win

POLICE COMMISSIONER Charles B. Ethredge was at the races. Each year, in a mild way, he succumbed to the lure of the running horses; six or seven afternoons a season found him at the track. And Ethredge, like many others, liked to place his bets—either at the pari-mutuel windows or with the independent bookmakers—and gain thereby a more personal interest in the outcome of each race. Yet Ethredge's primary interest in the races was not financial—it was esthetic. He loved most to look upon the lean-limbed beauty of patrician thoroughbreds and to thrill to the stout-hearted, neck-and-neck finish of a close race.

The second race was coming up. Ethredge had just placed a small bet on a ten to one shot—a horse owned by a personal friend—and had stepped aside to deposit his ticket in his breast pocket.

The next person in line was a smallish, wizened person of indeterminate age. His clothing was shabby and none too clean. Some poor devil trying to stretch a couple of dollars by betting on a long shot, Ethredge decided.

"Four C's on Lady-be-good," the little man was saying matter-of-factly. "On the nose."

Beneath his breath Ethredge whistled. The little man was, in his betting at least, no piker. And the four one-hundred dollar notes lay in the pari-mutuel window to back up his effrontery.

For the odds on Lady-be-good were large! And he had played the horse, not to place, but to win!

Even the cashier was dumfounded. But he gave the little man his tickets. The little man walked away from the line and made his way through the crowd toward the rail. Ethredge followed.

The horses were already on the track when Ethredge and the little man found places on the rail, not too far from the finish line. Ethredge studied the horses carefully; Lady-be-good was acting nervously, prancing around stiff-leggedly with her ears laid tight back. She always behaved this way, Ethredge knew; she was too temperamental a mare to be a consistent winner. It was a shame, really.

There were two false starts. But then the horses got away and thundered, beautifully bunched, down the stretch toward the first quarter-turn. As they lengthened out for the turn Ethredge saw that Lady-be-good was in third place, running easily.

That race provided the first startling upset of the afternoon. For Lady-be-good won by three lengths, and in so doing she clipped three-quarters of a second from the track record for her age and class.

While pandemonium burst and surged about him, Ethredge glanced at the little man, standing a half-dozen feet down the rail. To his surprise, he saw that the little man still stood as he had stood throughout the race, his elbows propped on the rail, his hands vertical, like blinders, on each side of his face. Only by the slow turning of his head had he given any indication that he had watched the race.

Slowly, then, he stepped back from the rail, and pressed through the crowd. He was going to collect his winnings.

Police Commissioner Ethredge, his curiosity unslaked, turned and followed. As

he forced his way along he was estimating, rather dazedly, that the little man must have just won thousands of dollars.

A second numbing shock, awaited him. For the little man nonchalantly pyramided his winnings on a second long shot!

The third race was being announced. . . .

AS THE afternoon slowly wore along, Ethredge followed the small, wizened man from betting-windows to track and back again in growing stupefaction. For the little man, pyramiding his winnings on long shots, had won in three consecutive races!

It was unbelievable, yet there it was.

Other persons than Ethredge had noticed the little man's winnings. The second race had attracted attention to him; the third drew a gallery of curious persons; in the fourth scores of the superstitious bet on his choice. . . .

The fifth race was coming up. The little man, as though aware that any further effort of his to bet would send the odds tobogganing, had neither turned in his old tickets nor taken out new ones; the press about him had grown so great that two policemen were necessary to escort him about the track. Commissioner Ethredge still remained close to the man; his curiosity was still unsatisfied. This phenomenal winning was something one read about in books; it never happened in real life. And yet it was happening now. . . .

There was a twofold purpose, Ethredge knew, in those guarding supernumeraries. For, behind the scenes, down in the stables and the paddock, owners and jockeys and plant officials were looking for doped horses, for evidence of fixed races, for signs of bribery. And Ethredge knew, too, that they were learning exactly nothing. Everything was as it should be. No horse had been doped, no jockey bribed to throw a race. The two supernumeraries would not have to arrest the little man, for no evidence had turned up against him—or against anyone.

And yet King Christophe, in winning the third race, had pulled a tendon so badly that it was thought he would never run again. . . .

Ethredge, during the last half-hour, had not been alone to watch the little man. He had been joined, greatly to his annoyance, by a broker acquaintance, Paul Caldwell, a person he passively disliked, partly because he suspected Caldwell of bucket-shop banditry, but mainly, as he had often admitted to himself in strictest candor, because the man had once been very much in love with Mary Roberts.

Caldwell, with indelicate persistence, was reiterating for the hundredth time an invitation for the Commissioner to spend a week-end at his lodge in the Adirondacks. Ethredge, under the circumstances, preferred to decline.

"No, Caldwell," he was saying, almost bruskly, "I can't get away."

"Well, then," Caldwell was persisting, "you must join my hunting-party in November. You know the lake, the isolation, the game."

Peculiarly, the little man was listening, as Caldwell went on to describe to Ethredge a lodge the Commissioner already knew very well.

Abruptly, then, and still escorted by the two policemen, he prepared to collect his winnings and leave the track.

His progress was slow. Newspapermen, photographers, and a swarm of the avidly curious surrounded him. The press of surging bodies was terrific. The two supernumeraries, shouting and gesticulating hoarsely, tried to clear a path through the crowd.

A photographer seized the little man's arm, spun him around forcibly. And suddenly that photographer clutched at his throat. The camera slung over his left shoulder slid to the ground, he stumbled,

sprawled forward on his face in the crushed grass. The policeman waved the crowd back.

"Give him air! He's fainted!"

But when a physician who had hurriedly stepped from the crowd had concluded his brief examination the crowd, suddenly still, knew that the photographer would nevermore need air. The little photographer was dead.

In the sudden silence Ethredge heard the little man's voice, quite clearly, talking to the reporters wedged close about him.

"I knew that it was my lucky day," he was saying, in a sing-song, whiny voice. "I found a bundle of bonds this morning, and a rich man give me five hunnert dollars for turnin' it in. I knew then that if I bet I would win."

"Well, why did you bet on the races?" someone asked. The shrill words sounded hideously callous, hideously sacrilegious, there in the presence of death. "Why didn't you bet on something else?"

Simply the little man answered, "I didn't know nuthin' else but horses. I used to be a jockey. Jimmie Dunn's the name."

5. Strange Hypnotism

IT WAS not yet nine o'clock in the morning of the following day when Detective-Lieutenant Peters stormed into his little office in the homicide division of the detective bureau and threw himself into his swivel-chair.

For a man of his usually placid disposition, Peters was singularly perturbed. Less than half an hour ago, as he stopped at a corner newsstand for a paper and cigars before proceeding to Headquarters, he had seen headlines smeared across this morning's *Daily Tab* that literally sent shivers of inexplicable fear sweeping his stalwart body.

The newspaper lay before him on his desk now. A wizened, well-remembered face stared ceilingward from page one; a face whose eyes had photographed indistinctly. Jimmie Dunn's face!

Jimmie Dunn's great human interest story screamed in the silent room:

PAUPER WINS $80,000 AT TRACK!

PRESS PHOTOGRAPHER DROPS DEAD FROM EXCITEMENT!

"This is my lucky day," Jimmie Dunn, ex-jockey, modestly explains.

The story followed, in two columns, on page three. But there was no need for Peters to open the paper in order to refresh his memory on any detail. He had memorized every word.

One paragraph in particular had sent strange little quavers chilling along his spine:

A more macabre angle obtrudes itself upon this saga of good luck in the death of Robert Searles, Globe Synydicate photographer, who collapsed while attempting to photograph Dunn and was pronounced dead immediately afterward by Dr. Lloyd Mattison, of 116 Capron St., who was among the crowd.

Dr. Mattison's opinion that death was due to heart failure was later confirmed by Dr. Phillips, track physician.

Searless was 41 years of age and unmarried. His body was removed to the Traynor Funeral Home.

"D a m n a t i o n!" Detective-Lieutenant Peters cursed and bit the end off a cigar.

At that moment the door opened and Police Commissioner Ethredge walked into the room. Ethredge was smiling.

"Good-morning, Lieutenant."

Peters did not smile. "'Morning, Commissioner," he mumbled.

Ethredge was grinning now. "What's the matter, Peters? You look as though you'd lost your best friend."

Peters' stubby forefinger stabbed sharply

down at the newspaper outspread on the scarred oaken desk.

"Commissioner, did you read that? There's something screwy in all this business!"

Ethredge glanced at the tabloid.

"Screwy?" he repeated. He shook his head. "I don't think so, Peters. I was at the track all afternoon, yesterday. I watched this fellow Dunn winning; I talked with track officials afterward. It was just an amazing run of luck."

Peters' jaw set hard.

"Listen, Commissioner." His voice was peculiarly hoarse. "I saw the beginning of this thing. I saw Beach lose that briefcase. Commissioner, Dunn *made* Beach put those securities down for him to pick up!

Dunn hypnotized Beach, just as he hypnotized me!"

"Hypnotized *you?*" Ethredge asked, startled.

Peters nodded.

"Commissioner, I wanted to tail along after Dunn, yesterday morning. And Dunn just *looked* at me, and that's all I remember. The next thing I knew I was almost home—and it was an hour later. Commissioner, Dunn hypnotizes you. But it isn't like ordinary hypnosis. It's like an electric shock. His eyes get fuzzy when he looks at you. God, Commissioner, that man could kill you by looking at you, just as he killed that photographer Searles when Searles startled him."

Ethredge shook his head.

"Oh, nonsense——" he began.

Suddenly, then, he paused. He had remembered how Dunn had stood at the track, watching each race, with his hands held vertically beside his face, like blinders, while his head slowly turned to follow the running horses.

And he had remembered how King Christophe had run until he tore out a tendon—to win the third race.

Suddenly, just as he was about to speak, the telephone rang.

6. Something Happens to Caldwell

ON THIS same morning Paul Caldwell, broker, having completed his matutinal exercises and shower, was brisking a comb through his sleek black hair preparatory to descending the stairs to breakfast, when he heard the sound, behind him, of an opening door. Startled, he whirled, an angry oath bursting to his lips.

That expletive was never uttered. For, to his surprise, Caldwell had recognized the man who, thus unceremoniously, had entered his dressing-room.

"You," he exclaimed then, in good humored astonishment. "Say, how did you get Morency to let you in without announcing you? He shouldn't have done that. But I suppose you've come to talk about investing that fortune you won yesterday. Boy, but you were a lucky devil."

Almost he licked his lips.

Jimmie Dunn did not speak. He merely stood there, his left hand still lingering on the door-knob. Slowly his eyes lifted to the stockbroker's face. And, as the eyes of the two men met, the millionaire's face suddenly went lax, his mouth dropped open loosely, his whole body sagged. In an instant he had become a mindless, drooling idiot!

Slowly, in that dressing-cubicle, the minutes passed. . . .

IN THE beautifully appointed kitchen at the rear of Caldwell's superb Colonial house Luigi Donizetti, Caldwell's chef, watched the glistening white electric clock high up on the wall and wondered why the master was late for breakfast.

The creeping minutes became a half-hour. Gradually the conviction grew in Luigi that something was wrong. The house was too still.

He deliberated on what he should do. But not for long. He was a Latin, and an artist, and he possessed an insatiable curiosity. Carefully he pushed open the little white door beneath the main staircase.

He saw Morency at once. The butler-valet was standing close beside the entrance-door, motionless, his head slightly lowered, as though deep in thought.

"Ha! Morency!" Luigi hissed the name. But Morency did not move.

"Morency!"

The butler stood like one in a torpor.

Luigi cocked his head and listened. No sound came from upstairs. Perhaps Morency was making the fool of him, making him the buffoon. He would show the Frenchman.

He tiptoed exaggeratedly across the polished floor toward the motionless butler, grasped Morency's arm, swung the man around.

The butler's face stared into his own. And there was no more expression on that face than on the face of a cretin; it was the face of a man who, living, had no more conscious knowledge of the fact of his own existence than if he were actually dead!

Luigi Donizetti's face blanched, and his hands began a steady, nervous trembling. For he was an artist, and he knew instinctively that this imbecility on Morency's face was not faked. It was as real as one of his own omelettes.

And suddenly he felt horribly alone, in that silent house. He must find the master.

Despite himself—for he was a brave man—he was whimpering as he plunged up the staircase and down the long, thickly carpeted corridor to Caldwell's rooms. Nervously, with shaking hands, he knocked.

There was no answer.

Luigi licked his lips, and knocked again. The silence from within was deafening. He tried the knob.

The door opened easily. Luigi stepped inside.

"Mr. Caldwell! Mr. Caldwell!" he was croaking.

Fearfully he looked about, at the great bed with its disheveled coverings, at the dumbbells lying on the floor where Caldwell had put them down. He moved toward the dressing-room door, opened that door, looked within.

A scream like the shriek of one damned ripped from his taut throat. For within that small dressing-room stood two men: Paul Caldwell and a stranger he had never seen before. Yet it was not the unexpected sight of the stranger that tore the scream from his lips. It was the horror that moved between the two men.

The men stood close together, their faces touching. And between their faces, filling the interstices like the mold that sometimes grows upon the top of a jelly, was a great mass of fluffy, grayish fuzz, finer than spun glass, more fragile than cobweb, softer than moss. And the hideous fuzz was exuding with a slow, inexorable tenaciousness of purpose from the face of the unknown stranger—oozing from his very pores and reaching out across the intervening inch or two to penetrate, almost as though Paul Caldwell's flesh were blotting-paper, Paul Caldwell's face!

Luigi Donizetti screamed twice, with the full intensity of his powerful Latin lungs.

The oozing fluff seemed to hesitate, to poise and lift, for a moment, toward him.

Luigi Donizetti screamed no more. And, presently, the oozing mold resumed its interrupted movement.

7. *The Death of Jimmie Dunn*

FOR an instant Peters and Ethredge, hearing the harsh jangle of the telephone, sat in inert, almost stupefied inac-

tion. Their thoughts, a moment before, had been boring in a direction so incredible that it took them an appreciable moment to recognize even the homely ring of the phone. But then Peters lifted the receiver from the hook. He listened a moment, and passed the instrument to the Commissioner.

"It's for you, Commissioner."

Ethredge took the call. With the first words his face showed an expression of extreme distaste, but rapidly that distaste faded into amazement. Then, with a sharp, "Call a doctor. Don't touch anything. We'll be right out," he slid the phone back across the desk and stared at Peters.

"Funny coincidence, Peters." A curious incisiveness had come into his voice. "We were just talking about Jimmie Dunn. Well, that was Paul Caldwell, the broker, who just called. Jimmie Dunn's in his house, deader than a doornail, right this minute!"

"What!" Peters exclaimed. "Jimmie Dunn?"

Ethredge nodded.

"He barged into Caldwell's dressing-room this morning, just as Caldwell was about to do down to breakfast. Opened his mouth to speak, and just toppled over, dead. Caldwell thinks he came rushing up for advice on how to invest that fortune he won yesterday—that the excitement finished him. We'll get Doc Hanlon and Cassidy and go along over. I'll notify the District Attorney just in case."

Peters, his mind awhirl, nodded.

8. *Sudden Recognition*

MORENCY, Caldwell's butler, let the police party into the millionaire's home and, apparently acting under previous instructions, led the way quickly upstairs. Peters, as they climbed the stairs, asked the man a single question.

"Did you let this fellow in, Morency?"

Morency shook his head.

On the second floor landing Paul Caldwel met the party and, after a brief "Good-morning, gentlemen," led the way to his bedroom.

Within the bedroom a youthful physician, whom Ethredge recognized at once as one of the more sophisticated country club set, but a good diagnostician withal, stood, hands clasped behind his back, gazing through the window. Diagonally behind him Ethredge saw the body, half in and half out of the dressing-room.

The young doctor turned away from the window.

"Heart, Commissioner," he said, with a slight smile. "Perfectly obvious what happened. Sudden accretion of wealth—couldn't stand it."

Doctor Hanlon had bustled over, and was surveying the body.

"You never can be too sure, young man," he said stiffly. "I'll take a look."

While Hanlon was busying himself about his examination, Ethredge talked with Caldwell. Almost idly he asked, "Who let this Dunn into the house, Morency?"

"Yes."

Abruptly Peters pounced upon the statement.

"Morency?" he snapped. "Morency says 'no.' Somebody's lying."

For an instant Caldwell did not speak. Then he laughed slightly.

"You don't believe me?" he asked. His voice was silk-smooth. "Call Morency."

Cassidy, standing in the doorway, called down to the butler. There was a pause, and then Morency appeared in the doorway.

Caldwell looked at him. The millionaire's left profile was turned toward the detectives, and, as if ponderingly, he lifted his left hand and touched his fingers to his temple. The gesture screened his gaze.

"Morency," Caldwell said crisply,

"these gentlemen say that you told them you did not let Dunn into the house this morning. Of course, you know that you did."

"Yes," Morency said promptly. "I must have forgotten. I remember, now."

Caldwell nodded. "Very well, Morency. That is all. Unless——" he paused significantly.

Peters shook his head. "No more questions, Morency. You may go."

"After all," Peters told himself, "in the eyes of the law there has been no homicide here."

As Morency left the room, Caldwell let his left hand fall negligently to his side. For an instant he looked at Peters.

Peters, gazing into those cold, oddly opaque eyes, could feel, almost with the force of a tangible blow, the suspicion and the antagonism of them, and sudden recognition. Caldwell *knew* Peters, although to the best of his knowledge the detective had never seen the man before!

9. Caldwell Secludes Himself

JIMMIE DUNN'S spectacular skyrocketing, within twenty-four hours, from oblivion to riches and coruscating, dramatic death, provided a newspaper sensation that lasted a week. His life story was syndicated; his photograph was widely reproduced.

Almost a thousand persons attended his funeral, and a score of second and third cousins appeared from nowhere to squabble over the disposal of the fortune he had so unexpectedly left. Quickly, then, the furor waned.

Only Peters, as the weeks passed, remembered the strange succession of events that had been the brief career of Jimmie Dunn, and vaguely suspected that the story had not yet reached an ending. Once, he had tried to argue with Ethredge.

"Why did that butler of Caldwell's tell us one thing, and then, when his master was present, tell us another? Commissioner, the thing that was in Dunn transferred itself to Caldwell, made the butler forget whatever he had seen. When I questioned Morency the thing realized that it had made a mistake. Perhaps it had never been up against detectives before. And so it let the butler remember, just enough more to make the stories dovetail. Commissioner, Caldwell isn't a man any more. There's a devil in him!"

"Lieutenant, you're a precious fool!" Ethredge had returned, with considerable annoyance. "If Caldwell had the powers you claim Dunn possessed he'd have made himself, by this time, the richest man in the world. But Caldwell has shown no inclination to corner the stock market, or to make puppets of his associates. Indeed, he's almost retired from active business. He's been spending the last few weeks at his lodge on Bear Mountain Lake, in almost complete seclusion."

For a moment Peters was silent. Hesitatingly, he tugged at his lower lip with the thumb and forefinger of his left hand. Then, doggedly, he spoke.

"Commissioner, as sure as I'm sitting here, he's gone up there for some damnable reason. There'll be hell to pay yet; you mark my words."

Ethredge laughed.

"I don't think so. And I'm in a pretty good position to keep tabs on Caldwell myself. I know most of his associates, and I frequently get word of him. For instance, I know that right now he's doing a bit of experimenting. I suppose it has something to do with marine engines—Caldwell was once quite a putterer that way. Maybe he's accumulated so much money that he doesn't need any more. In any event, if your curiosity ever becomes unendurable we can take a run up there for a weekend. Caldwell's invited me, innumerable times."

10. Mary Writes a Letter

MARY ROBERTS, in the cool of a late September afternoon, received the unexpected telephone call from her former admirer with a mingling of pleasure and discomfort. Paul Caldwell's lovemaking had, at one time, been both impetuous and wholly sincere; except for an innate cruelty and ruthlessness which she suspected the man possessed, he had been, at all times, a charming companion. Certainly he had been a gentleman. And he had stepped aside, when she told him of her choice, quietly and without dramatics.

But all that had been many months ago. Undoubtedly he would greet her now merely as an old friend; there would be little in the meeting to embarrass either man or woman.

Waiting now, in the commodious, softly toned living-room of the Roberts' town apartment, she caught herself thinking of Charles. Perhaps, she mused, long engagements were, after all, a mistake, although she herself had insisted. A winter-time wedding would be nice, with the pure white snow frosting the ground. . . .

The foyer bell rang.

"I'll answer it, Eileen," she called to her maid. "It's only Paul." She moved to the door.

As she opened the door Paul Caldwell entered quickly, grasped both her hands hungrily.

"Mary!"

She drew back. However flattering his attentions might once have been, she definitely did not want him to resume them now. A half-jesting, half-serious rebuff was on her lips. And then she saw that he wore glasses, heavy-rimmed, huge-lensed, quite opaque. Swift pity overwhelmed her anger.

"Paul! You poor dear! What on earth's the matter with your eyes? Come in here and tell me——"

Impulsively she grasped his hand and led him into the living-room. And, even in that moment, she sensed the odd fact that, although his glasses were so opaque that she could not see his eyes behind their curved lenses, he nevertheless found his way unerringly across the floor to a chair, with the calm, confident assurance of one who sees perfectly.

For an instant the room was still. Then Paul Caldwell spoke.

"Look! Look at my eyes." The slow words were a command.

She was standing before his chair, looking down into his face. His right hand ripped away the glasses. The eyes of the man met the eyes of the girl.

She did not speak. For a moment, she did not move. Then, slowly, she turned, and went toward the small desk that stood in the angle beyond the fireplace. Seating herself, she drew forth notepaper, pen, and ink, and began to write.

11. The Parasitic Mold

WHEN Charles Ethredge received, by special messenger, Mary Roberts' cryptic note and read, in stunned incredulity, its message, he stood for long minutes in the center of his grimly utilitarian office and turned over and over, in the fingers of his right hand, the huge square-cut platinum-set diamond that had tumbled from the envelope. Mechanically, then, he placed the ring in his breast pocket. Slow minutes ticked away.

As the minutes passed, through the welter of heartbreak that swept the man one insistent conviction kept recurring again and again. It was not like Mary, even though she meant the words she had written in the note, to tell him in this way. Mary would, at least, have sought to explain.

Ethredge stared again at the silvery-blue tinted notepaper.

"Charles," the note read, tersely, *"I have decided that I do not love you. I have fallen irrevocably in love with Paul Caldwell, and I am going to the mountains with him this afternoon. Katy is going with me.*

"Please do not attempt to follow me, or to persuade me to reconsider. My mind is made up.

"I am returning your other gifts to your home. *"Mary."*

Hesitatingly, then, Ethredge lifted the receiver from his telephone and called the Roberts home. Dully, numbly, he heard the dread confirmation of his fear—Mary had already packed and left the house; she had gone to Bear Mountain Lake for an indefinite stay.

Her last gesture at home, then, had been the entrusting of ring and note to a telegraph messenger.

It was all so unlike her—so utterly unlike the girl he had known!

Paul Caldwell—damn the man! He had never really given her up at all. Some plan like this had always been in the back of his mind. Good God! he must have hypnotized the girl!

With a curious, intent expression on his face, Ethredge jabbed at a buzzer and asked for Detective-Lieutenant Peters. . . .

When Peters entered the Commissioner's office he found his superior seated very erect, with lips thin-drawn and face expressionless, behind his desk. Without a word Ethredge pointed to the note. Peters read the message twice through, slowly.

"Paul Caldwell!" he said, then. He sat down and stared earnestly at his chief.

"I told you—that Caldwell wasn't human," he said, his voice low. "No human being could take Mary away from you, Commissioner."

Ethredge laughed bitterly.

"I hope—now—that you are right," he muttered; then, as a sudden ghastly thought struck him, he added hastily, "God, no—I don't! A man—at least! For the love of Heaven, Peters, tell me your suspicions. I'll listen."

Peters, with a far-away look in his eyes and a frown wrinkling his brows, began to speak.

"Jimmie Dunn looked at Beach, and Beach stopped dead in his tracks, put down a briefcase full of securities, and walked away. Jimmie Dunn looked at me, and an hour passed of which I remember nothing. He looked at long-shot horses, and those horses won. And then Jimmie Dunn died—in Paul Caldwell's presence. And, later, Paul Caldwell looked at Morency, and Morency conveniently remembered something he had forgotten. And now, as I suspect, Paul Caldwell looks at your fiancée and Mary Roberts breaks her engagement and runs away with him.

"Commissioner, this is not coincidence. And neither is it hypnotism, in the sense that we ordinarily understand the word. For, Commissioner, man may hypnotize man, but what human can impose his unspoken command upon a *beast,* and compel that beast to obey—*to an extent beyond its normal endurance?"*

Peters paused, and drew a deep breath. In the sudden silence, as the full impact of Peters' words hammered against Ethredge's consciousness, a chill of nameless fear shriveled the flesh at the nape of the Commissioner's neck. There was horror here—elusive, vague, alien.

Slowly Peters continued: "Comissioner, that thing that looked at me from Jimmie Dunn's eyes was something not human, maybe not even animal. Perhaps it doesn't even come from Earth; probably it doesn't, because it seems alone of its kind. But, on Earth at least, it lives as a parasite. It moves into a man's brain as a man moves into a house; it seems so incredibly thread-like in its physical texture that it can move between the cells of a man's flesh as a

swarm of gnats pass unimpeded through a coarse screen. It's like a mold, Commissioner, an unbelievably delicate mold. And, God, it was beautiful to look at, spreading over Dunn's eyes like a silky down."

Suddenly he stopped, sat staring at the scarred desk-top beneath his eyes. Then, after a moment, he resumed:

"The greatest horror is that the thing is parasitic. It seems able to assume the life and the interests of the man it inhabits. It gambled on horse races when it was in Jimmie Dunn's body; seemingly it was unaware of any method of disposing of the securities in its possession other than by returning them to their addressee. But in Paul Caldwell's body it——"

"Fell in love with Mary!" For an instant Ethredge's pain-lined face lifted to Peters', then was cradled in his hands.

Peters slowly shook his head.

"No," he corrected. "Caldwell was always in love with Mary. This thing in him has merely asserted that love."

Ethredge's fists were rhythmically knotting and unclasping.

Grimly Peters went on: "There is peril here, Commissioner, and we must fight it. There is far greater danger of tragedy here than in your personal loss, or in Mary's enslavement. The thing is but one, now, and despite its tremendous will and its unhuman intellect—for it is, perhaps, almost an embodiment of pure thought—its capacities for harm are strictly limited.

"But what would happen if it could reproduce its kind, as it perhaps can? Why has it taken Mary?"

His eyes were bleak, unfathomable, as he added, with terrible conviction:

"It has gone into comparative solitude. Paul Caldwell was essentially a companionable man. So we know that it has deliberately denied itself the satisfaction of at least one of Caldwell's instincts. Why?"

In the dead silence that fell over the room the big clock high up on the smoke-grimed wall ticked on, maddeningly.

With hideous certainty, Peters added a final prophecy.

"It is planning—to live out its life cycle among mankind. It needed money, and it secured money. It needed a well-informed human brain, and it forthwith usurped Paul Caldwell's. It needed seclusion, and it has gone to his lodge. All this has been done purposely."

Ethredge lifted his face from his hands and looked haggardly at his subordinate.

"We're going—to Black Bear Lake, Peters," he said grimly. "Tonight."

12. Caldwell's Lodge

ETHREDGE'S long black sedan rushed through the lonely night, a sentient, stream-lined monster. Albany had been left behind long before; the sweeping curves, sharp grades and plunging declivities of this mountain country were becoming more frequent as the car bored deeper and deeper into the wild pattern of wilderness and lake.

In the east the sky was already tinted with the pearly, false dawn. There had been a delay in starting while Peters, as Ethredge waited in growing impatience, had made cryptic and curious preparations, for which he had offered no explanation. . . .

The black car, skirting the lake, was rolling through a sleeping village. Across a great bend at the foot of the lake Ethredge glimpsed the long rambling log lodge that was Paul Caldwell's camp.

"There, Peters. Across the lake."

Peters peered intently through the slowly lifting opalescence.

Ethredge's voice was bleak. "I want to go, first—alone."

Peters understood. "Stop the car. I'll wait here in the village."

Before the small general store the car

halted. Peters got out, stood in the macadam, a small leather bag tightly clenched in his left hand.

"How long will you be, Commissioner?"

Stony-lipped, Ethredge answered, "I'm going directly there. I shouldn't be over an hour or two."

Peters nodded.

"Very well. I'll wait. If you're not back within two hours I'll come for you."

KNOCK . . . knock . . . knock.

The tattoo of Ethredge's lean fist against the hewn pine door of Paul Caldwell's rustic lodge was a demanding challenge that carried far out across the silent lake. Alertly, then, Ethredge waited.

Curiously, there in the dawn, all this suddenly seemed slightly unreal, slightly impossible. Had it not been for Mary's note—yes Mary's note was the greatest impossibility in all this mad succession of events!

The door had opened. It was a second before Ethredge realized that, in the early stillness, his approaching car could easily have been heard for miles.

Paul Caldwell, fully dressed, except that he wore an informal smoking-jacket in lieu of a coat, stood in the cedar-paneled hall. His eyes were obscured behind dark glasses.

"I've come to speak with Mary." Ethredge spoke calmly; the queer conviction was in him that this was a dream and that presently he would awaken. He knew a moment's vague irritation because Caldwell's glasses hid the man's expression.

Caldwell stepped back. "Isn't it rather presumptuous, your coming here?"

Ethredge could feel the anger seething within him. His voice, when he spoke, was ominously quiet:

"No. Mary owes me a face-to-face explanation. You will be good enough to send for her, Caldwell."

The broker shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well." He lifted and rang a small bell. "I suppose that you would prefer to speak with her alone."

Ethredge nodded. "Yes."

There was the sound of footsteps from the rear of the lodge, and Morency, hastily attired in dressing-gown and trousers, appeared.

"Morency, please inform Miss Roberts that Commissioner Ethredge is here."

"Yes, Mr. Caldwell." Turning away, Morency ascended the staircase that bisected the rear of the hall.

Oddly, then, Ethredge made a peculiar observation. "You rise early, Caldwell."

The shadow of a smile flitted across Caldwell's lips.

"Yes. I have been working very hard." Abruptly he changed the subject. "Mary's cousin Katy is here, and her maid."

Stiffly, Ethredge bowed.

And then Mary's light, well-remembered footfalls sounded overhead. Caldwell gestured to a door.

"You may use the gun room. There is wood in the fireplace, if you care to light a fire."

Momentarily he chuckled, as he seemed to stare at Ethredge through the opaque glasses.

"I didn't wear glasses when I saw you last, did I, Commissioner? I forgot to tell you that my eyes have been—acting peculiarly of late."

13. The Horror in the Door

PAUL CALDWELL'S gun room was cozy and picturesque, with its bearskin rugs on the floor, its hides and heads on the walls, the warm, wavering glow of the fire crackling merrily in the massive stone fireplace. These things were a picture of enchantment. But the stony indifference of the golden-haired girl sitting in a wicker chair before the fire destroyed

the harmony that should have pervaded the room.

Ethredge was standing. Behind his back his clasped fingers were twisting and untwisting.

"Mary, you've got to come to your senses! You're not the same girl who loved me! You've changed, somehow."

The golden-haired girl stirred irritably. Her eyes, until now deliberately fixed on the blue-yellow fire, lifted to Ethredge's face. And as she looked at him the eery conviction that had been growing in him —the conviction that in some manner beyond her own control she had elusively, horribly changed—deepened. For, although she looked at him she appeared not to see him; there was a curious vague fixedness in her gaze, like the stare of a slightly wall-eyed doll. It was as though the attention she vouchsafed him was purely polite, purely mechanical; as though her real thoughts were submerged.

For an instant her gaze seemed to focus. Yet, even in that focussing, it seemed to Ethredge that she was not looking directly at him. She seemed looking around and beyond him.

She spoke in an inflexible monotone.

"I have told you, Charles, that my mind is made up. I am sorry that I have hurt you, but things like this have happened before and will happen again. Please go now."

The peculiar thought was in Ethredge's mind that something was behind him, watching him amusedly. And then torrential, bitter words burst from his lips:

"God Almighty, Mary, has that man cast a spell over you? By all that's holy, I believe he has! But—I'm coming back for you, Mary. By Heaven, if necessary I'll abduct you and have you examined by a psychiatrist!"

The expression in Mary's eyes, staring into Ethredge's own, did not change. Suddenly, then, Ethredge wheeled. That vague awareness of something behind him, watching him in soundless amusement, had abruptly, sharply crescendoed to an overpowering, crawling certainty that that amusement had turned to anger, that a mighty malignancy was gathering behind him!

A door had been, as he stood talking to Mary, directly behind Ethredge. He now faced that door. It was an ordinary-enough appearing door; obviously it led to a serving-pantry, for it was fitted with a small sliding panel about fifteen inches in diameter, behind which was quite probably a collapsible shelf—all in all a very handy arrangement for the informal serving of drinks or *hors d'oeuvres*. This sliding panel stood open.

Framed in that fifteen-inch rectangle was a horror so monstrous that the mere sight of it froze Ethredge into instant immobility—immobility so terror-torn that it might dissolve within the span of a heartbeat into shrieking madness!

Something of about the size and shape of the head and neck of a man looked through that opening. But there all resemblance ceased. For the horror was about the color of asbestos; it was like a living bust which has, unbelievably, sprouted a luxuriant growth of *mold!*

14. A Lapse of Memory

IN THE yellow-blue cool of the morning Lieutenant Peters stood beside the road and listened to Ethredge's big car drone toward him along the winding lakefront. A glance at his watch told him that Ethredge had been gone a little less than two hours. The Commissioner was driving fast.

The big sedan whirled around the last bend and rushed toward him. With a squealing of brakes it slid to an abrupt halt.

"Jump in." Ethredge's face was thun-

der-black. "We're going back to town."

Leisurely Peters climbed into the car. Matter-of-factly he reached over and shut off the switch. Then, his voice almost hypnotically quiet, he asked:

"What happened back there?"

Ethredge reached for the key, but Peters shook his head. Then, with a half-suppressed, choked sigh, the Commissioner began to speak.

"She's through with me, Peters—finished! She's madly in love with the man. We talked over an hour. But what could I do? Things like this do happen, Peters."

Peters was careful not to look up.

"Commissioner," he asked, with elaborate casualness, "just what were her words to you—her exact words—when she bade you good-bye, there on Caldwell's porch? Or, perhaps, did Caldwell show you to your car? Or did you just walk out alone?"

A half-silly expression of puzzlement slowly crept into Ethredge's face. After a moment he shook his head bewilderedly.

"Lord, Peters, I can't remember!" His voice had fallen almost to a whisper. "I can remember Caldwell's letting me in, and then my talking for a long time with Mary, but I don't remember leaving the lodge or getting in my car."

Peters nodded. His voice, when he spoke, was grimly calm.

"Caldwell did that. Caldwell numbed your brain, stuffed it with thoughts of renunciation you would never think, yourself, in a million years. We've got to go back and—destroy him—before he unlooses horror."

15. The Violet Light

MOONLIT night had settled over the forested hills before Peters and Ethredge, after a day spent in cautious reconnoitering, began to approach Paul Caldwell's lodge. Peters had insisted that they spend long hours in watching the lodge. But Caldwell had remained within the rambling log structure throughout the day.

Peters wondered why. And in some strange way he sensed that the man was busying himself with feverish haste, working toward the early achievement of some obscure plan. . . .

A hundred yards from the rear of the lodge, Peters stopped sharply, drew Ethredge into the ebon obscurity beneath an aged, twisted maple. Here, in the thick dark, he put down the leather bag and dropped to his knees. In a moment he rose again to his feet, pressed something cold and smooth into Ethredge's hands.

"What on Earth——" Ethredge whispered.

Peters' soft laugh was grim.

"Rubber sheeting." The words were so low that their tangibility seemed lost; they were like thought-images born of the dark. "Put it over your head like a hood; I've cut eyeholes."

Bewildered, Ethredge obeyed. He had known Peters too long to retain any slightest disposition to ridicule even his most absurd-seeming theories. . . .

"There. I think I can see now."

Peters, who had also donned a shapeless rubber hood, was pressing a second object into Ethredge's hands.

"Lead-impregnated goggles. Put them on." Cryptically he added, "I think that now he—will be unaware of our coming."

Together the two weirdly hooded, goggled figures stepped from beneath the tree. Crouching low as they crossed a moon-bathed stretch of turf, they plunged into a protecting band of ebon darkness cast by a hedge that ran irregularly toward the lodge. Minutes of utter silence passed.

But then, at the rear of the lodge, the two invisible figures surveyed the moon-stippled structure. Only on one side did any lights gleam; from two adjacent windows on the ground floor thin slivers of

eerily fluorescent blue-violet light struck from behind closely drawn shades into the cold calm moonlight.

The two crouching figures, moving like amorphous ghosts, were crossing the open space behind the lodge. Above their heads was a small, tight-closed window. One figure climbed upon the shoulders of the other. A hooded, monstrous-eyed head pressed against the blindly staring glass.

There was a brief, silvery flash of moonlight against steel. The small window began to slide noiselessly open.

The upper figure disappeared within the opening. Presently two white hands reached downward, drew the figure below upward into the lodge. The window slowly closed.

Ethredge and Peters were within a small butler's pantry at the rear of Caldwell's camp.

Through long seconds they stood in immobile silence, listening. But, except for faint rustlings and the infrequent, quiet tread of footsteps from that room, so few feet away, from which had shone the violet light, the house was still. Whoever slept in Caldwell's lodge—slept soundly.

Slowly, inch by inch, Ethredge opened the door into the black corridor. The two men merged into the darkness. The door closed.

Twenty feet away, three feet above the floor, an almost invisible, blue-violet lightening of the gloom flickered and wavered. That unearthly glow marked, Ethredge and Peters were sure, the door to the chamber within which Caldwell toiled at his unfathomable labor.

Moment by moment, with mind-shattering caution, and invisible as the darkness itself, the two men approached that door. And then, before the door, Ethredge slowly stooped to his knees. Through an old-fashioned keyhole a small rectangle of weird light diffused in the blackness.

The light was blotted out. Still as a man of stone, Ethredge watched, while Peters wondered.

Through that keyhole Ethredge looked upon—nightmare!

16. The Incredible Machine

A VIOLET light overspread the room. There was no other light in the chamber, and Ethredge, kneeling at that rectangular, antique keyhole, felt his nerves crawl and his knees turn to water as the grisly realization swept him that perhaps the thing that was in Caldwell *needed no light!* For that violet glow was not in the room for any purpose of illumination. Enigmatically utilitarian, it wavered and flickered from all four sides of a monstrous frame set at the farther end of a fantastic and anomalous machine that dominated the center of the room, and a something that wore Paul Caldwell's clothes moved about before that machine and manipulated its strange controls!

The machine was a thing beyond human comprehension. As much an enigma to Ethredge as a radio tube would seem to a Tasmanian savage, it loomed there in that weird flickering light, an ambiguity the more sinister because of its utter quiescence. Except for that strange violet light radiating from its farther end it might have been some property from a cubist stage setting, so grotesquely, geometrically alien it was. Seemingly cast from some substance that lent to it the vague impression of extra-terrestrial strength—as though perhaps that stuff might be electron-stripped neutronium from the dead heart of some ebon star—it was a vast rectangular funnel, perhaps eight feet in aperture at the nearer and ten feet at the farther end, and open at both, like an unsymmetrical box which has been stripped of two of its sides. Its outer walls were covered with a complexity of crystal-like ducts and helixes of queerly distorted shape through

which a vari-colored liquid ebbed and pulsed; its inner walls were porcelain-smooth, like the inside of some strange, *unfinished* passageway. For the thing appeared oddly, curiously *incomplete*.

And then Ethredge put his left hand between the smooth rubber hood and his face, and bit into the lean strong flesh, hard, to keep from shrieking aloud. He had been watching, with a rapt, ecstatic horror, the being that had once been Paul Caldwell, as it moved about the unfathomable machine. He had seen Caldwell lift his hands to one of the transparent helixes.

Even Caldwell's hands and wrists were now completely covered with the gray mold!

The violet flame, streaming from the larger end of the monstrous funnel, was becoming more intense. And then, as Ethredge's eyes, for the first time, looked directly through that enigmatic tube, his blood congealed and his mind swirled.

It was as though he crouched at the focal point of some angular telescope, for he looked directly through the funnel, from the smaller to the larger aperture. But, through the frame of leaping violet light that rimmed the thing, he did not see the farther wall of the room. He gazed, instead, into nothingness—into nothingness so absolute that even the conception of it was staggering! Blackness in which light had, perhaps, never been, was not now, and might never be! Nothingness in which even the gravitational attraction between atoms did not exist—nothingness which was not even space! Nothingness, illimitable.

Even to look into that blind, unfeeling immensity sucked at Ethredge's nerves, sent his flesh crawling. And then he saw it, in the infinity ahead—the tiny pinpoint of violet light that appeared from nowhere and rushed toward him! It was growing; while time stood still it became a square framework a quarter of an inch across; then it was the size of a facet of a large dice; then as big as the top of a card-table.

Framed in that rushing square of light he saw moving things, small visions of horror that were growing larger.

The speed of the frame was slowing. Beyond the narrowing gulf of utter nothingness it had become as visible and clear as a miniature picture upon a screen, and the sight of the mold-encrusted *things* that squirmed and pressed forward in silent eagerness toward its rim of violet flame sent waves of cold and heat rushing through Ethredge's body.

And then Ethredge screamed, tore at the door with suddenly frenzied fists!

For the mold-covered horror that was Paul Caldwell had abruptly appeared in the nearer of the joining funnels, was standing, its back to Ethredge, looking eagerly ahead across the narrowing gulf. And it held by its mold-shrouded left hand as in some unholy betrothal, the slender right hand of Mary Roberts!

LIKE a man amok Ethredge plunged into that room. His right hand was clawing at his hip as he leaped, a panther-ine bundle of steely sinew, toward the gaping mouth of Caldwell's grisly funnel.

The thing that was Caldwell turned. With unhuman swiftness it thrust Mary against the wall of the funnel, crouched slightly, its gray-furred hands outstretched to meet Ethredge's rush.

The horrid face of it— that *shape* of a face, limned in living mold!

Ethredge's right hand gripped the butt of his blued-steel automatic; the gun swung up. But no stream of bullets seared from the stubby muzzle as Ethredge squeezed the trigger. The gun had jammed.

A raging, human catapult, Ethredge plunged at Caldwell. Then the men were locked together, were struggling like weird demons within the mouth of that fantastic

funnel. Weird demons—the hooded, goggled man, and the mold-impregnated thing that had once been Paul Caldwell.

The hideous, furred hands of the thing were clawing at the hood over Ethredge's head and shoulders. Ethredge's makeshift rubber helmet was slipping—even as he crashed the butt of his gun against Caldwell's skull it tore away.

For an instant Caldwell reeled. But then—he *looked* at Ethredge. Though his eyes were no longer distinguishable, though they had long since been overgrown, like the rest of his face, with that horrible fuzz, yet he looked at the man—the fuzz looked at the man. And in that moment Ethredge's brain stopped working, as completely and shatteringly as though he were sitting in the electric chair in that taut second when the rheostat spins and the current rives.

Ethredge's body slumped to the porcelain-smooth floor.

The horror that had been Caldwell turned back toward Mary Roberts, took her unresisting hand in its own. It waited. For the funnel that had come from beyond the infinite and the funnel that the thing had built in Paul Caldwell's lodge were merging into one—were becoming the two component parts of a single mechanism. The incredible passageway was gaping wide!

17. The Crowding Shapes

PETERS, in the second when Ethredge ripped open the door, had slid back into the shadows, in the same moment loosening his service automatic in its holster. And he had watched, through wise eyes that had already dimly anticipated the horror beyond that closed door, the brief violent struggle between Ethredge and the man entity. And he had waited.

Momentarily his attention had focussed on the intricate system of crystal-like helixes, throbbing with the flow of fantastically colored liquids, and seemingly as fragilely blown as soap-bubbles. Then his gaze had reverted to the horror surging through the incredible funnel.

It was a thing elemental and primitive as the metazoa that swarmed Earth's steaming seas in pre-Cambrian ages. It was almost without organized structure; certainly it was without eyes or ears or any semblance of a rigid skeleton. And yet in some horrible way it was not an evolving type; it was a degeneration from some higher form, however simple; it was devolution. Monstrous, amorphous, thrusting itself forward and oozing ahead into itself. And it was gigantic.

Yet the greatest horror was not in the thing itself, or in its utter uncomformability to any kind of life that has ever evolved on Earth. The horror was in that the thing—the great, blind, shapeless, hungry thing, mindless, perhaps, hardly more than ameboid—was cloaked and permeated with the same gray ciliated fuzz that had taken root in the body of the man Caldwell and had usurped that body like a malignant fungus. Even the crawling, ameboid monster was directed by a parasitic life not its own! Its living substance, like Caldwell's, housed the grayish mold!

Though no conscious thought crossed Peters' mind—for no man could have thought and remained sane in that moment of reeling horror—yet somehow he *knew* that that alien fuzz before him was a form of life that had perhaps endured for eons upon the whirling planets of long-dead suns, life that had evolved until it had cast off almost all body and had become almost wholly brain, life that had become so specialized that it was now completely parasitic, life that menaced all other life-forms in all the universes!

Like a fascinated spectator at some fantastic drama, Peters watched the gray-furred, ameboid thing roll down the funnel. And now it was close to where that

which had once been Paul Caldwell stood waiting, holding Mary Roberts' hand.

For an instant the ameboid mass, shapeless as viscid slime, paused, and Peters knew that it was conversing in wordless thought-speech with the gray man-thing before it. And then it moved abruptly toward Mary.

Behind it came others of its kind, oozing, ameboid shapes, all alive with the hideous, parasitic fungus, all eager to enter this new world where the life-forms were endlessly varied and complex, all impatient to shed the protoplasmically elementary bodies in which their race had been imprisoned through, perhaps, billions of years. And behind them their followers were as a vast gray sea crowding into the narrow throat of the funnel.

Then, with simian swiftness, Peters moved. The terrible, fascinated paralysis that had gripped him as he watched the ameboid thing approach was suddenly gone. His right arm swept up—his body plunged toward the funnel mouth.

For the crawling, ameboid thing seemed about to overwhelm Mary, and, with hideous certainty, Peters knew that it would discard its ameboid body after that fusion.

Even as he leaped, he realized, with a curious, detached hypersensitivity, that the fluorescent violet glow had faded from the room as the funnel from beyond the infinite and the funnel within the room had merged into one. And yet the weird light still pulsed in the crystal helixes.

The ameboid thing was flowing about Mary's knees!

And then Peters' gun was barking, and as the snub-nosed automatic roared, the violet glow of pulsing fluid in the nearest of the helical tubes faded and died and, like a fragile echo, there came to Peters' ears the faint, ephemeral sound of shattering. The crystal helix had burst like fine-spun glass! Again Peters fired, and again, and the complex helical tubes shattered like creations of frozen mist.

And at the invisible juncture of the two halves of the funnel there abruptly appeared the faintest suggestion of a blowing, violet steam.

The mold-encrusted thing that had once been Paul Caldwell wheeled and stared toward where Peters stood, a fantastic, goggled and hooded figure, vaguely limned in the pallid light that streamed through the monstrous funnel. And, striking at the shapeless hood that covered his head, hammering against the thin sheet of insulating material that cloaked his skull, Peters sensed the powerful thought commands of the thing. And wild exultation swept him as he knew that those commands were diffused, knew that he was still master of himself. Slowly he raised the gun.

THE automatic crashed—two shots—and the horror that was Paul Caldwell clutched, with a strange, grotesque, *clawing* gesture, its clothing-encased chest, and between the mold-ridden fingers Peters saw jetting, rich red blood. The thing's head drooped forward, and horribly its mask of mold twisted and writhed in human gaspings. Blood was pouring from its mouth.

The thing, the immaculately clothed thing, sprawled forward on its face; its hands drummed the funnel floor.

The ameboid monster oozing about Mary's knees had suddenly paused. For behind it, between the once juxtaposed halves of the alien funnel, had abruptly appeared a pencil-thin hiatus that limned the four smooth walls as though a simitar of violet flame had sliced that weird tube in half. And slowly, while the violet flame pulsing from the farther half of the funnel deepened and grew more intense, the violet hiatus widened.

With inexorable slowness the rift grew. And now, like incredibly thin tissue, the

wall of flame was beginning to tear, to show flickering patches of absolute black. Behind the ameboid thing, the multitude of gray-fured, shapeless things hesitated.

Suddenly, then, the lone, ameboid horror seemed to pause over the motionless body of Paul Caldwell, that still body from which the gray mold slowly poured. With a strange, caressing gentleness, it flowed toward the writhing, *growing* patch of defenseless gray mold. Ameboid thing and pool of mold merged into one.

Like a viscid slime, the ameboid thing rolled across the rim of thinning violet flame into that gray world where those of its kind milled and struggled.

Peters, all unconsciously, had crept closer and closer until now he stood within the funnel mouth. At his feet lay the bullet-riddled body of Paul Caldwell. Hardly knowing what he did, he lifted that body in his arms and thrust it across the widening violet rift. And in that instant the last wavering streamers of violet light, still reaching out from beyond the utter black toward the funnel in which he stood, tore away.

Peters stood in utter, blinding darkness! For, with the flickering out of the last ribbon of flame joining the two halves of the incredible funnel the ameboid, mold-infested things had disappeared; and, with them, the frame of violet light that had enclosed them, and the funnel-half into which they had surged!

Peters' fingers, fumbling, searched his clothes, found and lit a match.

God! Peters stared before him in utter unbelief! Three feet beyond where he stood, three feet beyond the mouth of Paul Caldwell's gargantuan funnel, standing sedately against a pine-paneled wall and flanked on the right and left by mounted deer heads, a superb old grandfather's clock serenely ticked away the minutes. Yet, sphinx-like, the funnel-half in which Peters stood remained, dominating the center of this large room, its helical mechanisms shattered, propounding a question unanswerable.

And at Peters' feet Charles Ethredge lay where he had dropped when the thing in Caldwell had stared at him. And on Peters' left, close against the smooth funnel wall, stood Mary Roberts.

Peters, moving with jerky, disconnected steps, almost like a puppet actuated by strings beyond his control, stepped from the funnel mouth. On the paneled wall before him, near the grandfather's clock, was an electric light switch. His trembling fingers touched the smooth round button; subdued lights flashed up.

For an instant he turned and stared uncertainly at Ethredge and Mary. And he remembered the obliterating, paralyzing shock that had hurtled through his brain, that day Jimmie Dunn looked at him. . . .

"They'll be all right in a little while—please God!"

But the lead that had spat from his gun must be retrieved, and the clotting pool of blood that lay, a silent, threatening enigma, on the funnel floor, must be washed away.

Methodically, Peters began that which he must do.

Moments later he heard the sound of footsteps behind him. Looking up from where he stooped within the funnel, he saw Morency, clad in dressing-gown and trousers, standing just within the open doorway. An odd bewilderment was etched on Morency's usually placid face.

"The—the master, sir," the man began hesitatingly. "Where——?"

Peters stepped swiftly toward the man.

"Morency," he said, his voice iron-calm, "your master has gone—away. He has gone back—among his own kind. Do you understand?"

For an instant Morency's right hand, clutching the door-frame, tautened. The bewilderment on his face slowly turned to

horror. He was looking at Mary Roberts and Charles Ethredge.

Almost imperceptibly, then, his lips moved.

"Sir—he will never—return."

The whispered words were stark with utter conviction. Morency, like Peters, *knew*.

18. Dawn at Last

A ROARING fire leaped and twisted in the field-stone fireplace that dominated the north wall of the living-room at Paul Caldwell's lodge. It had leaped and danced so for hours, for the night had been long and there had been much to do and much to agree upon. But now it was close to dawn.

Mary Roberts, Ethredge, Peters, and Morency were gathered close about the singing flames. Musingly, Peters spoke.

"Pray God we shall never know from whence he came. From beyond our solar system—from beyond our galaxy—from beyond our space-time continuum, perhaps? Pray God that we shall never know—that he and his kind will never return."

Morency, kneeling, was tilting the glowing logs with brazen tongs. Peters went on speaking:

"How came he here? Did his voyage require moments, or hours, or billions of years? These are unanswerable questions. But we know that it was necessary for one of his kind to precede the others, and set up on a suitable world the mechanism by which they might follow. And we shattered that mechanism."

He smiled and nodded, almost dreamily, as Morency stepped back from the fireplace. "I think that he came from a higher dimensional plane. Certainly that alien machine warped both space and time."

He was silent, pondering. But Ethredge, his right arm about Mary's shoulders, leaned forward slightly.

"How did you know, Peters, that the hood and goggles you improvised would deflect his—mental commands?"

For a moment Peters, before he replied, looked thoughtfully at his chief.

"I didn't know. I only *knew* that all thought, all energy—everything that is—are fundamentally electrical. And my hood and goggles were made of non-conducting materials."

Except for the subdued snapping of the blazing logs, the room was still. Ethredge's lean, strong fingers soothingly stroked Mary's shoulder. Abruptly, then, Ethredge spoke.

"Do you think you will feel able to start back to the city this morning, Mary?"

She turned toward him. There was still a trembling hint of horror in her voice as she replied:

"Yes, Charles. I want—to get away—from this place. It has been like a nightmare—shot with patches of awful blackness."

Morency coughed, then, the perfect signal of a perfect butler who wishes to attract attention.

"I beg pardon, but it is nearly dawn. Perhaps you would all like coffee? And, since you desire an early start, might I suggest that Miss Mary rouse her cousin and her maid?"

Ethredge glanced through the long, deep windows that overlooked the lake. And he saw that, indeed, the night had given way to the lightening that precedes dawn.

"Thank God," Ethredge was thinking, "that they slept so soundly!" Aloud he said, and there was genuine admiration and friendliness in the words, "The coffee is an excellent suggestion, Morency. I think that we would all like coffee. And Mary can wait a few moments before she calls Katharine. Perhaps you, Morency, will take coffee with us?"

Ah, broken is the golden bowl! the spirit flown for ever!
Let the bell toll!—a saintly soul floats on the Stygian river.
—Poe: *Lenore.*

A Million Years in the Future

BY THOMAS P. KELLEY

This is the weirdest and most exciting interplanetary story ever printed—a tale of the Black Raiders, conquerors of a thousand worlds, by the author of "The Last Pharaoh"

The Story Thus Far

THE year 1,001,940 finds the green star, Earth, a wild and desolate planet, ravaged by a hundred invasions from the stars, its once great cities in ruins, and its fifty thousand or more remaining populace a barbaric and war-like people—divided into numerous small tribes, and fighting constantly among themselves. And among these are the Bardonians, a proud and fearless race inhabiting the ruins of a once mighty metropolis they know only as the Purple City, and ruled by a wise and kindly king.

And it is there we meet the young Prince Jan—Jan of the superhuman strength and invincible sword-arm. As a boy he has learned the legends of his tribe, as well as the cruelty and power of the Black Raiders, those strange invaders who come from the sky in their great space-ships at intervals. The Black Raiders, who have conquered ten thousand worlds, are the unchallenged champions of space. He learns also when last the invaders came to the Earth, and he was but a babe, how they carried away the lovely young queen who was his mother, as well as the many other beautiful girls, for the harems of the nobles on their distant world, Capara.

So, in his twenty-fourth year, when the Blacks again return to his world, the mighty Jan battles them furiously, but is at last captured and sentenced to the Moon of Lost Souls, the terrible prison satellite, some fifty thousand miles from Capara, by the commander of the black fleet, Metak. Then, in departing, the invaders release the Vapors of Vengeance, terrible poisonous gasses, that destroy every living thing upon the earth.

On the Moon of Lost Souls, Jan is compelled to toil in the fields as a beast of burden, along with the millions of other captives from the various stars. He hears of the glorious Tara, beauteous white queen of the Black Raiders, who is said to reign on the mother planet, Capara, in a palace of gold. He also makes the acquaintance of Abel, a weird, bird-like creature from a distant star, and together with several other captives they plan flight.

On the night planned for the venture, Abel is missing, and Jan, searching for him, finds the bird-man bound and being questioned by the Kamma, or head guard, and another who he learns is Magog, son of Metak. Jan kills Magog, releases Abel and binds the Kamma, then flees with the bird-man to a near-by space-ship, only to pause in amazement in its doorway, for there, securely tied to a small chair in the pilot room, is a beautiful golden-haired girl who looks at them in wide-eyed wonder!

The story continues:

"A versatile giantess, blood-smeared and wicked, came forth with a long, bejewelled knife."

PART II

8. The Moon of Madness

IT WAS a lovely vision she presented even in captivity. Her scanty jewel-encrusted trappings revealed rather than concealed her lithe, delicately rounded body. A brilliant red feather protruded from the back of the slender band encircling her shapely head. But despite the glittering, barbaric apparel, it could not hide the royal beauty of those exquisitely chiseled features; of those long-lashed, blue eyes, and slightly parted, perfect lips, that showed a row of pearly teeth—a beauty enhanced a hundredfold by the tumbling mass of wavy golden hair that fell to her white shoulders in a lovely disorder.

On a cot near by a huge Black lay in slumber.

As we appeared in the doorway the girl saw us. That she realized we were friends was evident, for as I raised a finger to my lips her eyes signaled warningly toward the Black. On tiptoe I approached and knelt beside her, laying down my longsword and reaching for her bonds.

"Sh!" I cautioned in a whisper. "We are friends. We have come to help you."

"Who are you?" came her answering whisper. "How did you learn of me? You are my color, yet are not of my world."

"I am an Earthman; Jan of the Bardonian tribe," I told her. "I come from a distant world that was conquered and destroyed by the Black Raiders. I was sentenced to this Moon of Exile, and have just now managed to escape from my chains. This here"—I nodded to the birdman behind me—"is Abel the Tor. He too seeks his freedom."

She nodded, her blue eyes wide with excitement.

"We are going to arouse this Black," I went on. "We will force him to fly the ship and take us somewhere, anywhere so long as it is away from here. I heard Magog tell that he is the ship's pilot."

"You know Magog?" she asked.

"We have met," I answered.

As I spoke, the thongs dropped from her arms and together we rose, her golden head just topping my shoulders.

"Vonna thanks the gods of her ancestors for sending you," came her soft voice. "My own world has been destroyed by the terrible Vapors of Vengeance, and I, its sole survivor, was destined to a life of slavery. But Magog," she added thoughtfully; "will he not follow us?"

"Neither us nor any other," I answered. "He is dead."

"Dead?" The slightest of frowns showed her bewilderment.

"Yes; Prince Jan killed him," put in Abel, speaking for the first time in his high shrill voice. "Prince Jan can kill anybody. Prince Jan saved me from the Kamma, then killed Magog. They were both planning to murder you and——"

We had been speaking in whispers as we talked, so as not to awaken the Black. Now as a running of footsteps suddenly reached us, we froze to rigidity and listened. The next moment a wild crash roared out through the night; a loud metallic boom that sent a chill to the hearts of the three of us, and brought the sleeping barrack's guards leaping to their feet—the alarm gong!

Twice more it thundered out above the din of the storm, and then a loud voice cried:

"Out, guards! Out, all warriors! An Earthman has killed your Commander and fled to the ship! After him! After him! Tear him asunder! Avenge the noble Magog!"

Together we wheeled toward the open doorway. There running across the courtyard was the Kamma, who had somehow managed to free himself from his bonds.

His right hand held a longsword, his left a paralysis-wand. Nor had the alarm gong or his wild cries gone unnoticed. The great barracks, a moment before so dark and silent, was suddenly ablaze with lights as its awakened inmates sprang to life. Its huge doors were flung back with a bang, as a hundred half-dressed guards and warriors came streaming into the open toward us with angry shouts and glittering weapons.

A startled gasp and a rustling sounded behind. Evidently the good fortune that had been with us was waning, and yet we must do something to meet this unexpected turn of fate.

"Close and bar the door," I called to Abel, then turned to meet the awakened Black, who was scrambling to his feet. The man's hands flew for his weapons, but before he could draw them my longsword was at his throat, and he was forced to raise his arms while his eyes glared their anger.

Outside, the shouts and running footsteps came nearer. I could hear Abel's frenzied efforts as he sought to reach the door and bar it against the guards. Another ten seconds and they would be upon us, yet I dared not turn to help him or take my eyes off the Black before me. There came the sound of a mad scraping, then a frantic call from the bird-man.

"The bar, Prince Jan! The bar!" he screamed. "It will not go into place—it is stuck!"

The leading guards were scarcely five paces off, running madly.

"Raise it a bit to release it from the catch —it has caught!" I cried.

There came the sound of a last wild effort from Abel, a loud shout from without. And then the bar shot into place just as the first guard flung himself against the door—late by a fraction of a second!

At sword's point I forced the Black before me to the front of the ship, whose metallic wall was studded with glittering levers and instruments, in the center of which was the thick-glassed lookout window.

"Get us out of here!" I ordered. I knew that if we did not soon get aloft we never could, for a continuous rain of blows was now being sent against the door. Despite its thickness it could not withstand that furious onslaught more than a few minutes.

The Black sought respite in a parley. "But what you ask is impossible," he began. "I know nothing of the handling of——"

"Don't lie!" I broke in, and made the gesture that threatened to send my blade plunging through his throat. "Do you take this ship aloft, or remain here to wallow in your own blood?"

IT WAS enough. His comrades were scarcely a longsword's length away, but the thick door that stood between gave me ample time to butcher him before they could come to his aid. With a shrug he turned to the control gears, his hand reaching for an oval-shaped instrument just above his head.

"Hurry, and no tricks," I warned, emphasizing the words with a sharp prod of my sword. The next moment there came a soft whirring sound that vibrated through the entire length of the great space-flyer, and the huge ship was rising into the void, while the shouts of the guards grew fainter, then died away.

Well, we were off. It did not mean we had made good our escape, of course, but at least there was no danger of an immediate capture. All the other ships on the Moon of Lost Souls were freighters, which could not hope to compete with us in flight. It would be hours before a fleet could be sent to find us, and by then we should be well out into space, with a million worlds and planets to choose from as

a hiding-place. Higher and higher we rose.

The Black pilot had clicked on the switch that sent a huge beam of light shooting into the rain ahead. He paused to look at a small, compass-like instrument, before he turned to me.

"I have obeyed you and we are aloft, Earthman, but not for long," he said, and there was a triumphant ring in his voice. "The fuel tank was nearly exhausted when we arrived, but we did not stop to have it replenished, for near-by Capara was our next stop. I doubt if we can keep going more than an hour. You have no alternative other than the mother planet or a return to the prison farms—unless you prefer to drift around in space till you are overtaken by the fleet that will be sent to find you."

Could not keep going for more than an hour! This was a surprise. The eyes of Vonna and Abel went to mine. I had given no thought to any definite destination—it was enough that we were leaving the Moon of Lost Souls. Any world could be reached by the Black Raiders, and they were sure to follow. It might have been that a return to my own planet was behind it all, but now the words of the Black pilot doomed that, for it was a journey that would require some hundreds of days, while we had but fuel enough to keep us going an hour.

Then as I stood there, bewildered and uncertain, there came that sudden flash of light that showed my only course—the words of my fellow captives the first night I had spent in the fields: "The Moon of Madness," they had said. "Capara's second satellite." "The only place in all space the Black Raiders will not go." "It must be something ghostly and terrible, for the Black Raiders tremble when the name, the Moon of Madness, is mentioned."

Directly ahead was that tiny satellite itself, scarcely a hundred miles in circumference, and looming larger every minute. Vonna and Abel were looking at me expectantly, for whatever my decision, they would abide by it. Then, as I continued to stare ahead:

"Where will we go, Prince Jan?" asked Abel.

"The one place no Black Raider will go, the only place where they will not follow," I answered him; then turning to the pilot, I pointed to the tiny world that showed through the thick glass of the lookout window.

"That is our destination, straight ahead —that unknown little satellite your own people call the Moon of Madness!"

FOR an hour the great space-ship plunged steadily ahead, while all the time that tiny world loomed up ever closer.

The Black pilot had put up a loud protest when I named our destination, and it required more than one jab of my sword, as well as several threats of immediate death, before he would continue our flight. Evidently it meant eternal banishment from his own land, as well as a life of torture in the hereafter; for he said he would be unable to return to Capara, even if that remote chance ever did present itself, once he had set foot on the Moon of Madness, as it was the law of the Black Raiders to slay any and all who returned from that terrible satellite—a law, he added, that had been made by the glorious Queen Tara so many thousands of years ago there was no record of its origin.

Presently I heard Vonna call to me from another compartment. The girl had been exploring the ship, for we had given it but a brief scrutiny and the back rooms might contain anything. Handing my shortsword to Abel with the words that he was to use it at the first sign of treachery from the Black pilot, I hurried through two large rooms, was soon beside the

Penelopian Princess and knew the cause of her excitement.

It was a good-sized room in which she stood—the sleeping-quarters with its thousand or more tiny cots rising in tiers from the floor to the ceiling, and running along the broad expanse of the room in rows. And half of them were occupied. At least five hundred Black Raiders were lying on their backs, strapped to the cots with hands folded on their breasts in that drugged, death-like coma, from which the counteracting serum alone could awaken them.

At first I could not understand their presence, for this was a ship used only in conveying the ransoms and tributes of the various worlds to the mother planet. It was Vonna who enlightened me.

"These warriors are used solely to impress the various worlds and kingdoms the ransom ship visits," she said. "Always, when they landed in the courtyard of my father's castle, the warriors would march behind Magog, stern and silent, as he received the payments demanded by Queen Tara—grim reminders of their power and what could be expected were we to be backward or hesitant in its delivery.

"And did they not also demand ransom of your world?" she asked.

"No," I admitted, "but the reason for that is plain. My world had been robbed of its treasures thousands of years before the Black Raiders landed upon it. Our legends tell us that first there were the Migs, who came and conquered the Earth five hundred thousand years ago, and that their descendants remained for many generations.

"When they finally left they took with them nearly everything of value my planet had to offer. Centuries passed; then came the Saurian men, who either seized or despoiled what was left. When the Black Raiders finally came they found only a ravaged, treasureless world, and a primitive, war-like people, divided into numerous small tribes and constantly fighting among themselves.

"So no matter how barren the Moon of Madness proves to be, or how war-like its inhabitants, if indeed it is inhabited, it will be only the hardy life to which I am accustomed. It is for you, Princess Vonna, that I fear, as in all likelihood we are doomed to spend our lives on that bleak little satellite. Perhaps I should have had the pilot return to Capara as he suggested, or——"

"No," she broke in hastily. "No; you have done right, exactly as I would have wished. All who were dear to me are now dead, and only my freedom is left. I would not want the Blacks to claim that also. No, Jan—er—Prince Jan." She stopped for an instant and smiled. "It is Prince Jan, isn't it? I heard the bird-man call you that."

I nodded, looking intently at the redness of her lips, the waving loveliness of her golden hair, the beauty of her youthful face. And perhaps the approval of my gaze was noticed by the slender Princess, for her eyes dropped shyly to the floor and a crimson flush mounted her cheeks. She was very, very beautiful.

PRESENTLY we heard Abel call. We returned to the pilot room. It was now dawn, the storm had passed, and directly ahead in that clear morning light, rushing swiftly toward us, was the weird and tiny world that was our destination—a small, bleak and desolate satellite, whose ugly, age-blackened surface appeared as one great boulder countless millions of years had seared and broken into jagged plains and peaks and valleys, studded occasionally with the gaping mouths of long-extinguished volcanoes.

The bird-man stood behind the pilot with ready sword. "He says we should not land, Prince Jan," spoke Abel. "He says it would be better for us all if he

were to stop the ship and let us die out here in space. I told him you would kill him if he did."

The Black turned, fear showing in his eyes.

"You do not know the danger, Earthman," he cried. "You cannot understand. It is beyond the conception of one of your primitive race."

"Suppose you try enlightening me," I suggested.

"It is the oldest world in space—the birthplace of Time!" he answered in an awed whisper. "Yes; somewhere on that bleak little satellite the great god, Time, once came into being. Can you not realize the enormity of it? Can you not understand what is certain to happen if we invade the sanctuary of a god? A hideous fate, perhaps a drawn-out existence filled with torture, that will last down through the ages. Let us stay aloft out here in space where death will at least be normal, for once we have landed, our exhausted tanks will not permit us to rise again.

"And perhaps there is a chance we may not die," he went on earnestly. "Perhaps if we remain out here, the fleet will come upon us sooner or later and we shall all be saved."

But I had little faith in the guard, and less that the arrival of the fleet would better the fortunes of either Vonna, Abel or myself—a life of slavery for the Penelopian Princess, and torture and death for the bird-man and me, would be the probable outcome. With a shake of my head I motioned the Black to continue his course and there must have been a finality in the gesture, for he gave a half-sob, then turned to the control gears once more.

But now that tiny world ahead was almost upon us. Soon we had plunged into its thin atmosphere, and shooting downward at terrific speed had a brief glimpse of black plains and towering peaks that flashed across the lookout window, weird and dream-like, and several times the gaping mouths of huge volcanoes; but no life or habitation showed on its desolate landscape, and presently the great ship came to rest, halting its mad rush at the last moment to right itself, then settle lightly in the center of a small valley.

There was a moment's silence on our part following the landing, for we were now upon that unknown world of a thousand ghostly legends, the only world on which the fearless Black Raiders themselves refused to land. What perils or horrors it might contain we could not even guess, but that human urge to know the unknown was strong within the breasts of all of us; and presently I had unbarred the door, flung it back and was stepping into the tomb-like stillness without, while behind me in wide-eyed awe and silence came the others.

It was a weird little valley in which we had landed, a valley entirely surrounded by towering peaks of jagged and fantastic formations, that glowed in the rising sun with a lustrous black hue. And the surface of that little valley was seared and gashed with a million cracks. Everything around us bore an uncanny, ghostly aspect, a hoary age almost terrifying. It was as though this tiny world had known a hundred billion years before any other came into being. And then as we continued to stand and stare I suddenly realized the significance of the smooth blackness of everything.

It was a petrified world on which we stood, a tiny jagged world of black stone, covered with the smooth ebon film of petrification!

Evidently the others realized it also, for presently Abel said in a dull, apathetic tone:

"It's—it's all stone, Prince Jan. Everything is black stone."

"It's the birthplace of Time," was the awed whisper of the pilot, and his voice

seemed to come from a million miles away.

"It's a world of stone, at any rate," I answered. "An ancient, ancient, age-blackened world. A world of such a hoary, unthinkable antiquity that——"

And then I stopped as though an unseen hand had been clapped over my mouth. From over the jagged peaks ahead a sound had suddenly reached us. Breathlessly we listened while it grew louder. Now we could hear it plainly, a steady, rapid boom-boom-boom, that might have come from miles away, for in the death-like stillness of that world of stone the vibration's din was almost limitless. Occasionally it would pause for a moment, only to resume that grim foreboding boom-boom-boom, whose origin we instantly knew—drums!

We were not alone on the Moon of Madness!

9. Blood-Stained Altars

THERE could be no doubt about it. From beyond the jagged heights encircling that tiny valley unseen humans, or at least unseen things, were beating a steady cadence for some unknown reason.

It would be difficult to pen the individual effect it had on those around me, but they were one in keeping rigidity and a wide-eyed, breathless silence. Nor was it to be wondered at. There was something uncanny, something terrible in the rhythmical beating coming to us through that tomb-like stillness, for it represented life where there should be no life—and somehow life seemed out of place on that age-old world of stone.

It was Vonna who spoke first. "Drums," came her soft voice. "Signal drums, perhaps? Can it be possible a strange race of people live here; that they saw the ship descending and are gathering their numbers before coming to investigate?"

"It is hard to say," I answered, hardly conscious of my words as I scanned the surrounding peaks. "I saw no sign of life as we descended, but then our speed was so great I could have missed it."

"No," came the rising voice of the Black pilot, and it was evident the strain was beginning to tell upon his nerves. "No; you did not miss it, for it was not there. It is the drums of the dead we hear, the drums of the long-dead who guard the birthplace of Time. They are assembling; then they will come forward and claim us." He broke down and commenced to weep.

"Nonsense," I answered. "Those drums are beaten by beings as much alive as you and I. The fact that they wait to gather their numbers before coming here tells they're not over-courageous beings at that. Yes, they are real enough, and unless I am very much mistaken we shall soon have proof of that reality."

The Black, unconvinced, stood in the doorway as though uncertain whether he should leave it or seek a hiding-place within the ship. And then, quite unexpectedly, there occurred that which decided the question without the necessity for further thought. Out from the silence of the peaks behind us there suddenly rolled another, faster, louder and much nearer boom-boom-boom of a drum, and with a scream the Black pilot turned and fled down the passageway to the far end of the ship.

"Let us all get inside," I said to the others. "It is evident we are being surrounded, and until we learn what manner of humans they are, and their intentions, it will be safe within the ship."

THE day passed slowly. With eyes strained on the lookout window we awaited the appearance of the inhabitants of that tiny world, and made plans for the future. Upon his promise of loyalty I armed the Black pilot with longsword and

shortsword. It was not difficult to obtain such a pledge, for the man had been in an almost speechless funk since our landing and realized that any attempt at treachery could at best but reduce an already tiny party, and hasten his own end.

But despite our long and vigilant watch we saw nothing, though several times we heard the beating of distant drums, and once a drawn-out scream so far and faint we could not be certain whether it was man or beast. At dusk I stepped from the ship for a few minutes and watched the sun's last rays grow fainter on the black peaks around us—a sun, incidentally, much larger than the one I had known on my own planet, for we were now three hundred million miles beyond the green star, and its own distance as well from its sun.

With the coming of night the tension increased, for we felt its blackness heralded an attack of some kind. All that day we had the feeling that unseen eyes were upon us. There was nothing tangible the eye could spot, only an eery perception that we were being watched, and that those same watchers were but waiting for the darkness to make their presence known. An air of impending disaster hung over the entire valley.

It was at last decided that we three men stand turn at keeping an all-night guard. Mine was the first watch. Vonna then retired to a near-by chamber, while Abel and the Black threw themselves upon the small cots they had dragged into the pilot room and were soon asleep. The hours passed slowly; then along about midnight I awakened them, and with their promise of a wary vigilance, sought slumber for the first time in many hours.

It was broad daylight when I opened my eyes. The sun had long risen and its warm rays were streaming through the open doorway. But what surprised me most was the solitude. There was no sign of my companions, or the slightest sound to betray their presence. Springing to my feet I ran swiftly from room to room, calling loudly as I traversed the entire length of the great ship, then returned again to the pilot room before I fully realized that awful truth—Vonna, Abel and the Black had vanished!

In the name of sanity what had happened? Where had they gone? If they had been captured and carried away, they would have at least put up a struggle enough to awaken me. And why had I not also been seized?

Half dazed by the suddenness of it all I ran out into the opening, looking hurriedly around and seeing only that bleak valley and the jagged peaks around it. I was about to return to the ship when a twinkle of steel caught my eye. In a moment I was beside it, picking it up—the shortsword I had given to the Black pilot the night before!

It was then I discovered the pass that led through the cliffs—a narrow cleft, twenty inches wide, directly before me—so narrow, in fact, that till now I had not seen it. Into this I hurried, my shoulders turned sideways that I might enter. It wound and twisted in a serpentine manner, several times narrowing to such a width as to be almost impenetrable, then suddenly at a sharp angle debouched upon a dreary plain and the strange, strange world beyond.

It was a black and desolate sweep of stone that stretched away to the far horizon and a distant outline of gigantic peaks, of such towering heights and fantastic formations as to appear as the creations of a nightmare. Fully a score of miles away arose those colossal barriers, but what at once caught my eye was that massive evidence of mankind; for far away on the uttermost tip of the highest of those great peaks was the outline of a mighty castle, its lofty turrets, spires and towers rising upward to disappear in the clouds.

Near by—a mile or so away—were three small hills.

I did not hesitate. I did not even give a thought as to what I could hope to accomplish single-handed. With that unthinking, characteristic rashness that has so often brought me to the brink of death, I started off at a rapid trot I could keep up for hours, toward that distant castle in the sky as I somehow felt it was there I would find the three I sought.

So swift had been my impulse, and so quickly had I acted upon it, that I had gone some distance before I realized I was unarmed save for the shortsword I had found and now held in my hand. But to retrace my steps to the ship and back would take many minutes, and might prove a fatal delay to those I sought to aid. And yet there seemed no other way. The three small hills were now before me, as was the black mouth of a large cave in the heart of the center one, in front of which rose a small stone dais. I was in the very act of halting my advance when the frantic cry of my name sent my gaze sweeping skyward.

"Prince Jan! Prince Jan!"

There a score of feet above my head and winging madly toward me, was the familiar figure of Abel the bird-man. He carried Vonna in his arms. The eyes of both of them were rude in horror as they cast continuous glances backward, and it was evident that Abel was nearly exhausted. The next instant I knew the cause. Close behind and gaining rapidly came a huge, serpent-like thing, fully twenty feet long, whose great wings and dull, brown body stamped it as both terrorizing and repulsive.

It was evident that grim race was swiftly drawing to a close. Another moment and the horrible thing would be upon them. Indeed, how they had managed to stay away from it this long was a mystery. The wings of both the pursued and pursuer were churning the air with a loud flapping.

Vonna looked down, forgetful of her own danger. "Run, Jan!" she screamed. "Run! Run for your life!"

How all this had come about I did not know, though I was certain of its outcome were not drastic steps immediately taken. There was but one chance for them—if only I could gain the attention of the awful thing that followed. Yet even as I thought this, I was running forward, shouting for Abel to fly toward me. Just before the cave I halted, and even in the excitement of that wild moment was conscious of footsteps within—some other terrible beast, perhaps. But I dared not divert my gaze from the grim tableau before me. Then several things happened almost simultaneously.

There came a frantic flurry of wings—Abel sank, panting and helpless, beside me—I heard Vonna come to her feet with a little cry of terror as gruff voices sounded from the cave—and then that snake-like thing shot straight toward me with the speed of a space-ship, its great mouth open and hissing loudly.

Straight into those onrushing jaws I plunged my shortsword to the hilt. The impact flung me against the side of the hill, which rose upright for a dozen feet, then sloped toward the top, but it also brought a hiss of pain and anger from the snake-thing. In a flash its tail whipped around and toward me, missing my head by a dozen inches in the awful blow that would have broken every bone in my body had it landed.

Before it could recover I leaped forward, and with every ounce of my strength sent my sword plunging once, twice, three times, into the scaly, armor-like skin of its neck. A long, fork-like tongue shot out toward me, but a back-hand slash of my blade severed it close to the root. With a loud, bloody bubbling, the snake-thing rose into the air, streaming a crimson, fetid froth.

But it was evident it had no intention of relinquishing the struggle. With huge wings flapping dismally it circled slowly around as though waiting for some opening, then suddenly dove once more toward me. Again my blade plunged into those open jaws; again that tail whipped once, but this time I was only partly successful in evading it, for it half caught me with the terrible blow that threw me to my knees, and sent my shortsword flying from my hand.

In a flash that huge mouth shot toward me, and defenseless as I was, I was nearer to death that instant than ever before in my life. It was a near-by boulder that saved me. In falling, my hand had come upon a heavy stone the size of a fist, and without waiting to rise I let drive at that hideous head with the vicious throw that smashed my jagged stone into a lidless eye, and closed that wicked little orb as its owner shied away.

Half dazed I rose to my feet, weaponless. Once more the snake-thing rose high into the air, then gathering its waning strength for a final charge, dove suddenly toward me in a mad, blind rush.

What happened was so fantastic as to seem almost incredible; and it must have been that the god of luck was with me; for as that giant body plunged down to mine, and Vonna's scream came to me, I gave the sudden side-step that sent it shooting past me, to smash against that hill of stone with a loud crash that could be heard for miles!

Picking up my shortsword I sprang upon the dazed and dying snake-thing. With two strong strokes its head was severed and a rivulet of thick blood gushed forth, to turn the blackened ground a dirty crimson; though it was some moments before life had fully left its scaly body, and that huge tail ceased its thrashing. But it would never battle or pursue another, and presently its long thick bulk lay still.

I TURNED to gaze upon a weird assembly. From the near-by cave, watching me intently, a hundred or more beast-like men had issued—short, stocky, white-skinned men some five feet in height, with great beards that covered their faces and fell upon their hairy breasts and bodies. Their little eyes were blood-shot and close-set. Their crooked legs were short and heavy, their arms long and muscular. Their thick brown hair grew low on their receding brows, and hung down their shoulders and backs. About their loins were faded skins of animals from which the fur had long since worn away, and some were even minus this primitive apparel. Each carried a heavy, knotted bludgeon.

Vonna and Abel, who had managed to put distance between them and the newcomers during the struggle, now glided beside me. And perhaps my own appearance was as unique to the little men as theirs to me, for I was disheveled and grimy, my leather trappings torn, and covered with the thick blood of the snake-thing.

We stood staring at each other; then I spoke. "What do you want?" I asked.

They looked at me in a dull, brute-like wonderment.

"Who are you, strange warrior?" said one. "Who are you who single-handed kills a trok, and speaks the language of the Nine Terrible Sisters?"

"A stranger to your world," I answered. "I come from a distant star, as do my companions."

They came forward, but more in curiosity than menace. They muttered among themselves for a few minutes; then:

"What are you doing here?" asked the spokesman, who appeared to be one of authority among them.

"Searching your world for such as you," I answered. "We want to be friends."

Again they conferred; then the spokesman said: "Come, we will be friends. I

am Shebak, Chief of the tribe of Shebak, and these are my people."

In another minute they were all around us, curious, feeling our trappings, and asking questions. Several of them gathered around the dead snake-thing—a trok they called it. From what I could gather they seldom ever saw one, for it was supposed to inhabit some strange world within their own, and only on rare occasions flew to the surface through some long-extinct volcano. They looked at me in awe, for they said killing one single-handed was unheard of.

Plainly these primitive people were but a step above the beast. They spoke in muffled tones, and in halting, short phrases, as though it were only with the greatest effort the words would come forth at all. The questions they asked were few and simple.

Presently, at a word from Shebak, they drew up in a long line, and totally ignoring us, raised their heads solemnly to the sun, and with arms extended above them murmured a weird chant. Several of their number, who carried odd-shaped, primitive drums, now began a steady thumping, low at first, then gradually rising till at last it drowned out the prayer of the others. These, then, were the drums we had heard on our arrival, and it was evident their owners were some strange sect of sun-worshippers.

It was now that I began to take stock of my surroundings. A time-worn pathway led into the blackened mouth of the cave, and through the gloom beyond. But before it rose that which was far more sinister—a stone, altar-like dais, from whose holed side protruded heavy stakes, to which a bound victim could be tied and laid across its hard surface. The altar itself was caked with dull, brownish stains, as was its immediate vicinity.

The rites concluded, Shebak came forward as though to lead us into the cave. But I wished to be more certain as to his intentions. Vonna and Abel had also noticed those sinister-looking stains, and gathered close to me. I pointed to the altar.

"For what purpose do you use the dais, Shebak?" I asked.

The stocky little man pointed to Capara, hanging massive and majestic in the sky.

"It is the altar of the Sisters," he answered. "Once every fifty dusks the Nine Terrible Sisters fly out from their Castle in the Clouds, and amid wild shrieks and mother planet, chanting prayers.

Once every ten dusks they come and carry one of us off to their lofty fortress, so that they may drink red blood and prolong their age-old existence."

"They drink blood?" I asked.

"Of course," he answered. "It is what they live on. They are Vampire-Women. They fear only the sun we worship, for if its warm rays strike them they will crumble to the dust that should have claimed them millions of years ago."

"How long have they been here?" I went on.

"Since time began," he informed briefly.

"Where are they now?" I continued.

He pointed to that far-away fortress in the sky, whose frowning portals showed dark and ugly against the surrounding blue.

"Lying in their moldy graves, deep in the dungeons of their terrible castle, awaiting nightfall when they may come to life once more. Queen Tara left them there to guard the great god, Time, and the secret of the Black Tower, countless ages ago.

"It is there they hold the great god prisoner. It is there they guard some great secret, which were it known, would bring destruction to the mother planet, Capara.

"But they will come at dusk," he went on. "Yes, at dusk they will be here, for it is tonight they come to carry one of us

off to the castle to sate their terrible thirsts."

He nodded to Vonna.

"It will probably be the golden woman they will take with them, for she is young and tender, and her blood sure to be sweet. Yes; it will surely be her they will take with them to their terrible castle this night."

10. The Thing that Came in the Night

THERE was an apathetic tone of resignation in the voice of Shebak as he spoke, a finality that told of the many years, of the many generations, his kind had known only an unquestioned submission. The others, too, were staring in a dull, beast-like stolidity. It was as though it never occurred to them that they might question the authority of the Vampire-Women. Evidently they accepted their commands and perpetrations as being as inevitable as death, or night and morning.

"Suppose she refuses to go with them?" I said after a pause. "Suppose your own people would refuse to go with them?"

"Would they not take them anyhow?" he demanded.

"Not if you stopped them," I answered.

"How could we do that?" he asked.

"Kill them," I replied.

He looked at me in a dull wonderment for a moment. What his thoughts were I did not know, but presently he said: "Come, I will take you to our huts, where we can eat," and with that the matter was temporarily dismissed.

Holding Vonna's hand, I followed Shebak into the cave, while close behind us came Abel and the stocky men, the latter with their bludgeons on their shoulders and trooping along wordlessly on their short, crooked legs. Our way led down a cold, smooth decline, worn hollow by the countless bare feet that had traversed it for ages.

But what at once caught my eye was the construction of the passage—it was evident that at some remote date this broad decline had been hewn by human hands, a theory strengthened by the many grotesque carvings on the surrounding walls. Gladly would I have tarried, but Shebak continued on without the pause that would permit a closer inspection, and presently the trail debouched up the strange village, and the stranger, buried country of the tribe Shebak—the world of eternal twilight.

The first impression was that we had come upon a great subterranean chamber, though I was to learn later that it was indeed a tiny, man-made world, that stretched away for several miles into the surrounding gloom on all sides of us. The only means of light and ventilation came from the numerous holes, twenty inches in circumference, which had been bored into the jagged roof some twenty feet overhead at regular intervals, and penetrated on through to the petrified surface of the black world forty feet above us.

There were thousands of them—thousands of those rounded holes from which streamed the light of the world above in pale and ghostly beams. This alone told of a labor and workmanship far beyond that of the primitive people who lived here—relics, perhaps, of a distant civilized race that had long since passed into oblivion. Like weird haloes streamed those thin pale glows of light, to cast their eery reflections upon the forty or more tiny, clay-built, cone-shape huts that now rose up before us.

The surface of this dank world was a hard, damp clay, patted smooth by the countless naked feet that had trod it for ages. From near by came the noisy gurgling of a swift-moving, underground river.

Toward this primitive village we were led, and to the hut of Shebak, where we

were well fed on hot wheat loaves and boiled tiny fish from the near-by river, a narrow stream in whose cold, shallow waters I was able to bathe and remove the blood and grime of my recent battle. The dead trok had been brought along by several of the men, cut into great pieces and consigned to the boiling-pots. From what I could make out, it was considered a rare delicacy, as the tribe seldom, if ever, captured one, and they could not understand why we three newcomers refused to partake of such a treat.

All in all the little community numbered, perhaps, three hundred humans. My six feet four inches of height, short black curly hair and beardless face were a source of wonderment to them, as were the bald pate and skinny arms and legs of the bird-man. They could hardly take their eyes from Vonna, whose golden beauty they regarded as something unreal and fragile.

Immediately following their meal the men curled up in sleep, while the slovenly, stupid-looking women, who wore only the skins of animals around their waists, and whose mentality, if anything, was inferior to that of their lords, returned to their clay fields and resumed the primitive agriculture that grew their simple needs; for it seemed that feminine labor alone prevailed in this strange world, even to supplying food and clothes. The men did nothing—absolutely nothing—even their bludgeons being carried for show, the women later using them to slay small animals that abounded in the two underworld forests.

It was now that I first learned how Vonna and Abel had been captured, as well as the fate of the missing Black pilot.

"It was shortly before dawn, Prince Jan," the bird-man explained. "The Black had stepped outside the ship for a bit, when suddenly I heard a slight noise like that of a struggle. The Princess Vonna, who had awakened and returned to the pilot room, followed me to investigate, as we did not wish to awaken you unless it was necessary. Hardly had we stepped without before a great claw seized each of us, and we were borne up into the blackness.

"For a time we could hear only a flapping of wings, and could not be sure what manner of creature had seized us. Dawn showed the terrible snake-thing, as well as the one ahead which carried the struggling Black pilot. Presently they came to ground in a small hollow between two hills. I whispered for the Princess Vonna to feign death, and I did likewise. The terrible beasts then killed and ate the pilot before our eyes, and fell into a slumber. When I was sure they were asleep, I whispered to the Princess, and gathering her in my arms, rose up and flew in the direction of the ship. But one of the snake-things must have awakened and started in pursuit. We were rapidly being overtaken when fate sent you toward us. The rest you know."

SOON after this one of the women, Shebak's mate, came to us to say that her lord had ordered we be shown their buried, man-made world. For several hours we followed her through a maze of wonders, seeing the tiny, subterranean fields of wheat and vegetables, and the two small forests in which roamed a number of small, harmless animals that supplied the tribe of Shebak with both meat and skins —forests whose twenty-foot trees brushed the jagged roof overhead.

As to the origin of this world our guide was hazy, though we gathered it had been hewn many thousands of years ago by the inhabitants of that little planet above us, during the long ages the surface of their small moon had been gradually changing from earth to stone. There had been thousands of them then, and they had managed to dig a world some twenty miles square. But the many sacrifices demanded

by the Vampire-Women down through the centuries had gradually reduced them to their present small number, and the woman added that another hundred years would doubtless see them extinct.

By the time we returned to the village, Shebak and his men had awakened and were sitting in a circle around a small fire, discussing some topic obviously important by their manner and gesticulations. At our approach they stopped, to gaze at us with their narrow, blood-shot eyes. Shebak motioned us to come forward and be seated; then he spoke.

"We have been talking among ourselves, strange warrior—talking of what you said," he began. "Never before have we dared to think such things, let alone speak them, but always do our numbers grow less, and we are desperate. If we do not do something soon, there will be none of us left to do anything. But how," he asked, "may we save ourselves?"

"What of the course I suggested?" I answered.

"But we cannot do that," said one. "They would be immune to our weapons and any normal death. Our legends tell us that once, ages ago, a bold chief of our tribe attempted to defy the Nine Terrible Sisters, but that the Vampire-Women called the Wolves of Worra—the black, cloven-hoofed wolves from the inner world—to aid them, and that a thousand of our people were devoured, and the chief subjected to such fiendish tortures that the echoes of his terrible shrieks can often be heard in the dead of night, even to this day."

"The rays of the sun alone will crumble them," said another, leaning forward as his little eyes found mine.

"Why not hold them till the coming of daylight, then?" I suggested. "As to their invulnerability, it is my belief that a well-placed sword-thrust or bludgeon blow will prove the contrary.

"Not that you should fall upon them without warning," I went on. "First tell them that they must never again harm any of your people, or return to this country."

"But they will refuse," said Shebak. "I know they will. They will be angry and probably sacrifice many of us on the stone altar as a punishment for such rashness."

"Then slay them," I answered. "After all, there are only nine of them, and you number more than a hundred warriors."

"Suppose they call upon the wolves to aid them?"

"Then slay the wolves also," I replied.

They conferred among themselves for some minutes. At last Shebak turned to me.

"Will you lead us if we defy the Vampire-Women, strange warrior?" he asked. "Will you speak to them tonight, and if they seek battle, will you lead us?"

"If you wish it, yes," I answered.

"We do," said Shebak. "We do, we accept you." Then the others echoed after him in unison: "We do. We accept you."

The women, who had come forward and squatted about the edge of the circle, now began a low beating of the drums and clapping of their hands. This seemed to be an awaited signal, for one by one the men rose to their feet, and screwing their faces into the most hideous grimaces and contortions, commenced a slow dance around the fire, chanting in time to their steps:

"We accept him. He shall lead us. We accept him. He shall lead us."

With the gradual rising of the drums, excitement and abandon waxed. Faster, faster became the dancing, louder, louder the yells of the dancers. The women rose and fell in unison, shrieking at the top of their voices. The men swung their bludgeons savagely at imaginary foes, with many boasts of the strength and the valor that was theirs. The din was deafening, but blood-quickening as well, and it was some

minutes before the tribe of Shebak had run the gamut of their emotions, and lay back on the hard-packed clay, panting and exhausted.

But as the pale light streaming through the holes grew paler in the dimness that announced the coming of dusk, their bravado was replaced by silence and nervous glances toward the pass that led to the cave above. As the dusk deepened, numerous torches were lit and stuck in the age-old niches.

IT HAD been agreed that with the coming of darkness Shebak and a dozen of his sturdiest warriors, together with myself, would meet the Vampire-Women at the mouth of the cave and order them away. But it required considerable encouragement and urging before they would follow me. At last, however, they agreed, and with several of their number holding flaming torches we again traversed the tomb-like blackness of the shaft, and a few minutes later emerged into a glorious night and a million glittering stars.

Out here all was clear and calm—the combined light of a huge moon and the mellow glow of gigantic Capara, brightening the bleak surface of the tiny world we trod with a soft, silvery radiance. Miles away rose the towering outlines of the mighty peaks and the ugly blotch on the highest of them that we knew was the Castle in the Clouds.

Scarcely had we taken our station, when: "Look!" exclaimed Shebak, pointing. "Lights! Lights in the castle!" and sure enough, out from that eery, far-away blotch, a little golden twinkle had suddenly shone forth; then, in rapid succession, another and another.

"The Vampire-Women!" gasped one in a frightened whisper. "Again the Nine Terrible Sisters have arisen from their coffins, and walk once more through their great halls of death!"

"Soon one of their number will come to claim one of us," added another after a pause. "Oh, we are fools to even try to thwart them!"

It had a strange effect on those stocky men around me, that lighted castle in the sky, and it required considerable effort on my part to prevent a wild retreat into their buried world once more. At length they agreed to remain with me, though it was evident the watch was not a popular one.

An hour passed; then suddenly a flapping of wings sounded in the blackness overhead, and the next moment a human form dropped lightly to the ground before us.

Up till now I had little faith in the stories I had heard of the Vampire-Women but the sudden appearance of the weird thing before us seemed wholly to justify them. It was a tall feminine figure; a slender, shapely black woman, devoid of even the slightest wearing-apparel, whose long straight hair hung down her back with a blackness almost blue, clasped with a golden ring at the back of her head. The face was that of a black granite statue, a terrible hardness that depicted every conceivable evil, cruelty and lust. The thin, slightly parted lips showed a row of beast-like white teeth, and the glittering, agate-like nails protruding from her tapering fingers, flashed and sparkled like diamonds in the torchlight.

From each of her shoulders protruded a huge, membranous, bat-like wing.

At the sudden appearance of that nude, black body, a frightened gasp arose from the warriors behind me; then with horrified cries, half of their number turned and fled down the age-old shaft, leaving Shebak, five others and myself to face the newcomer. The Vampire-Woman wasted no time in salutation.

"Out, out, all of you!" came her high, strong voice. "Bring forth your womenfolk and your young that I may choose one

to——" and then her eyes fell upon me and went wide.

"Golden Blood of Tara!" she exclaimed. "Who is this one?"

"A stranger, Great Sister," ventured Shebak. "A stranger. He comes from a distant star and——"

"A lie!" snapped the Vampire-Woman. "None dares come to this world. It is the command of Tara herself!

"But can he not speak? Has he no tongue?" she demanded.

"Yes; he has a tongue and——"

"Then find it!" she cried, wheeling to me, "or must I find it with the plucking-tongs?"

"What is it you wish to know?" I asked.

"Oh, so you can talk, eh?" The Vampire-Woman stepped back where she could better see my face, her lips curled in a sneer, her hands on her hips, wholly unmindful of her nudity, and wicked and barbaric in the torchlight.

I nodded in a manner that did not decrease her wrath.

"Then explain your presence here, and quickly," she went on. "Who are you? Who is your tribe, and where is their hiding-place?"

I looked directly into the black eyes before me.

"My identity and that of my tribe is of no immediate importance," I answered, "though the message I have for you is. Neither you nor any of those other black fiends who dwell in yon castle must ever harm or come near these people again, or so much as set foot within a mile of this cave and their buried world."

"What!"

"The words were plain and you understood them. Return now to your kind and tell them that the tribe of Shebak will destroy them if they ever come here again. Haste! Not for long can I hold my itching sword-hand, or that desire to plunge cold steel into your putrid heart!"

At the moment of plunging steel into her heart, a wild terror sprang to the eyes of the Vampire-Woman, who up till now had been glaring only maniacal rage and hatred. She stepped back fearfully—incredulous, amazed.

Shebak and the others had noticed that sudden fear and were heartened by it. Now they came forward with raised bludgeons and muttering:

"Go Vampire-Woman! Go or we will kill you!"

She glared wildly around her, then raised a faltering arm. "Stop, tribe of Shebak! Stop!" she screamed. "Have you gone mad? Has this man bewitched your minds?"

But the stocky little men came closer, growling angrily:

"Go! Go or we will kill you!"

She must have realized that they were indeed past her authority, for she continued to retreat as she spoke.

"I go, I go," she spoke hurriedly, for it was evident that in another minute the fast-mounting rage of the little men would hurl them upon her. "I go to tell the Sisters your answer, but remember what happened ages ago when a chief of your tribe sought to defy us. Again we will send the black wolf to the inner world to summon his cloven-footed brethren. Again they will come from the volcano in the great number that will sweep all before them. And tomorrow at sundown I and my sisters will wing from the castle, and lead them straight here to devour you all.

"Then we will see if this man can save you!" she cried. "Then we will see if the defiance he now flaunts can protect the tribe of Shebak from the dripping maws and rending teeth of the cruel Wolves of Worra!"

And with a wild scream that ended in a high, terrible laugh, the Vampire-Woman leaped into the air, and flapped dismally away into the night.

11. Wolves of Worra

THERE was little sleep in the underground village of Shebak that night. Though the words of the Vampire-Woman had told that we need expect no immediate attack, excitement ran high, and it was quite late before the tribe settled down to sleep.

At dawn they were all up and about, making ready for the coming battle. Knives were sharpened, bludgeons inspected, and the long hair of the men pulled tightly to the back of their heads and secured in a knob, so as not to obstruct vision. Huge quantities of fish and game were boiled and tied to their persons, for the coming battle might last for hours, during which the warriors would have but brief intervals to eat.

All the while these hurried preparations were going on—since dawn in fact—a score of the older women had kept up a continuous beating of the drums, and chanting of age-old songs whose very origin had been lost centuries upon centuries ago.

By mustering every able-bodied man I was able to gather a fighting force of some hundred and forty warriors. Most of them were past their best years, but such seemed the general case with the populace of this strange world; most of the victims demanded by the Vampire-Women being between the ages of fifteen and forty, that left an inhabitance chiefly composed of children and elders.

It was decided we would meet the Wolves of Worra upon the plain just before the cave, and not allow them the advantage of gaining the shaft leading to the village. The women and children would remain in the huts with a guard of ten old warriors. Watchful sentries had been posted on the plains with instructions to warn us at the first approach of danger.

From what I could gather, the wolves were expected to come from the great volcano whose gaping mouth showed black and ugly on the plain some two miles away. The warriors said that a giant spiral runway led around its massive interior to the inner world, three miles below. None of them had ever been there, or even seen the Wolves of Worra, but they were certain they existed and would shortly be upon us.

Shebak had offered Vonna the protection of his own hut, along with his wife and child. All that morning the girl had been assisting the women in the preparations with a skill and swiftness that belied her royal heritage, and raised her high in the esteem of the tribe. She asked my opinion as to the outcome of the impending battle.

"There may not even be one," I answered with a smile. "Those Vampire-Women, or creatures, or whatever they are, have terrorized these people for years. Consequently, many stories are told of them about their supernatural powers. However, even if that is the case, I fail to see what we have to fear from a few hundred wolves. The warriors are armed with sharp knives and heavy bludgeons, and each should be a match for a dozen such animals."

Shebak, who had been listening, was certain of the struggle, but it was the Vampire-Women more than the wolves, that frightened him.

"They are the terrible ones, the Vampire-Women," he said, "for how may we kill creatures that die at dawn and awaken at dusk?—creatures who sleep the slumber of death in the hours of light but arise at sundown? Legend tells us that sharp steel alone must be buried in their hearts to bring eternal death."

Shortly before noon one of the sentries came tearing down the shaft and into the village, to report that moving forms could be seen emerging from the great volcano two miles away. In an instant all was con-

fusion. The women made the air hideous with their screams, while the warriors hurried into their huts for knives and bludgeons.

WITH Shebak and several others I hurried up the shaft to the mouth of the cave, where several excited sentries beckoned our glances into the distance before us. Two miles away the open mouth of the volcano lay close to the earth, and rising from it were black, running forms, while near by were numerous others.

Shebak shaded his eyes, then spoke: "It's they," he said with finality; "it's the first of the thousands of the cloven-footed wolves that will shortly be lining up on the plain. Doubtless the great spiral trail within the volcano is packed with them at this moment, all hurrying to answer the call of the Nine Terrible Sisters.

"But they will not attack till sundown," he went on, turning to me. "They will mass before the volcano in their great numbers, but they will wait for the Vampire-Women to fly from the castle and lead them against us. That is what they did, ages ago, when they nearly killed us all."

All that afternoon the Wolves of Worra continued to stream from the volcano in a seemingly endless black swarm, and join the great number already there. As the shadows began to lengthen and the sun to sink lower, there must have been five thousand of them assembled on the plain before us. They made no effort to attack or come nearer, but now as the waning light told the end of day, many of the great brutes squatted upon their haunches, and throwing back their heads to the dying sun howled out the long, blood-chilling wails that came floating over the desolate plain toward us.

I had drawn up my warriors in a triangular shape before the cave, placing the strongest in various positions of importance. With Shebak and his stoutest warrior on either side of me, it was my plan that we three would form the tip of the triangle and meet the brunt of the expected charge.

Not that we attempted to delude ourselves as to the outcome. In the face of those terrible odds there could be but one outcome, and we all knew it. They had but to give the one wild charge that would sweep all before them. The men of Shebak had resigned themselves to the inevitable, though with a surprising bravery, for they resolved to go down fighting. The women, who had come from the cave, were mingling among the warriors for a last farewell. Realizing the nearness of an attack, Shebak now ordered them below.

Vonna and I had been talking together, a little apart from the others.

"I suppose this means good-bye, Jan," she said, as the women began to move into the cave and back toward the village; and though the voice of the Penelopian Princess was steady, there was a suspicious moisture in her eyes. "My one regret is that I was unable to repay you for saving me from the Raiders."

"You will have ample time later. It should not take long to finish off those brutes," and I tried to smile as I lied.

But the girl knew better.

"No, Jan. Do not try to deceive me. You know as well as I do that it is the end."

"If we only had more warriors," I answered bitterly, looking around at that little group of primitive soldiery so soon to meet the onrush of thousands. "Or larger, well-armed men. Oh for five hundred good blades! Why, we could sweep——"

"Jan!"

The eyes of Vonna went wide, and her little hand dug into my arm in excitement. "Jan!" she screamed. "The Raiders! The five hundred Black Raiders!"

"The wha——"

"The five hundred Raiders, Jan! The drugged warriors back in the ship! Arouse them! Awaken them and they will help us!"

In a flash I understood and realized what she expected of me. A mile away were five hundred seasoned fighters. If I could awaken and return with them in time we might yet be saved.

I wheeled to Shebak.

"Hold every man in place!" I cried. "Fight with a vengeance, and keep courage till my return! The tribe of Shebak may yet be saved!"

He did not answer, but nodded as the eyes of all of them flew to mine. The next moment I was beside the surprised Abel, and climbing on his back ordered him to fly swiftly to the ship. The Tor spread his great wings, and with me clinging tightly to him rose upward, then shot straight toward the tiny valley, cutting through the air with the speed of an arrow, and the wind screamed in our ears.

All this time the howls of the pack on the plain had been increasing. It was evident that the beasts were rapidly becoming impatient at the long delay. I strained a swift look backward at the distant Castle in the Clouds, fearful of the twinkling lights that would announce the Nine Terrible Sisters had again arisen from their coffins, but as yet no light gleamed through the gathering dusk.

Presently we topped the peaks surrounding the valley and a moment later came to the ground before the open door with a soft thud.

"This way, Prince Jan, follow me!" cried Abel, for I had whispered my plans to him in flight, and his years of confinement on the Moon of Lost Souls had familiarized him with the ships and habits of the Blacks. "They keep the awakening serum and the needles they use with it in the cabinets at the far end of the ship."

"Haste, for the love of your Ancestors!" I answered. "Even now the Sisters may be winging from the castle!"

THROUGH the door and down the passageway we dashed to the cabinets at its far end, passing the five hundred drugged Raiders, our hurrying footsteps resounding loudly in the death-like stillness of the space-ship. Abel instructed me in the use of the needles and vials of thick, brown-colored fluid, and a moment later I was beside one of the cots, sinking my needle into the arm of its occupant, while the bird-man did likewise to the sleeper on another.

The two Raiders came to themselves, then sat up, wide-eyed in wonder. I thrust a needle and a small vial into the hands of each of them.

"Here! Help arouse the others!" I ordered. "Quickly, and ask no questions! It's a matter of life or death!"

They looked their surprise but spoke no words, and as I hurried on to the others I heard them come to their feet and follow my example. A minute later and six more were awakened. These were given the same brief orders, as were those whom they in turn restored to consciousness. From first till last it could not have been more than twenty minutes before the Raiders were aroused, and the entire five hundred of them, each with a longsword and shortsword strapped around his person, were pouring from the ship into the little valley where I addressed them.

Their ranks were buzzing with a thousand questions, but as I buckled a longsword and a shortsword around me I yelled above the din:

"Hear me, soldiers of Capara, hear me!" I cried. "Hear me before your throats have been ripped by terrible teeth! How all this came about and where you are is secondary, and can be explained later. Your lives depend on your immediate actions. A mile away five thousand wolves are preparing to

attack a little party of a hundred and forty warriors. After that they will come here and fling themselves upon us!"

I paused, and the wild wailing of the wolves echoed to us.

"One course alone is open to you!" I shouted. "The ship's fuel tanks are exhausted, nor can you hope to leave this world. Unite yourselves then with the warriors on the plains. Together, with our combined strength, we may yet beat off that terrible pack. You are all armed. Hurry, then, and follow me. It's your only chance!"

Without waiting for an answer I turned and ran for the pass, shouting for Abel to fly ahead and tell Shebak we were coming. Close behind me came the others, and as I hurried through the rocky defile I heard the steps of the following Raiders, and the scraping of their weapons against its narrow sides.

A grand assurance, that sound of arms, and increased by the knowledge that doughty swordsmen carried them. But as I came out from the defile to the moonlit plain beyond I beheld the sight which told I would need every one of them, for far away through the silvery gloom and towering high above us, the mighty outline of the Castle in the Clouds was a golden blaze of lights.

Just above us gigantic Capara covered half the heavens. The tiny silvery sphere that lay between was the prison satellite, the Moon of Lost Souls. Even now if they chanced to glance upward the warriors might realize where they were, and becoming terrorized, refuse to follow. But luckily the excitement of impending battle made them oblivious to all else, and if a few did guess their whereabouts, they made no mention of it.

But now the Black Raiders were streaming from the pass in wild disorder, some shouting, some laughing, but all of them willing to fight and slay with the fury that was theirs. One, an officer in their ranks, had been the first to follow me. At the sight of the lighted castle he roared a barbaric oath.

"Lights!" he exclaimed, his black features agleam with the joy of impending battle. "By the Beauty of Tara, lights! Then at least there are some humans on this hoary, jagged world!"

"Suppose your men discover they are more than humans?" I asked him. "Will they flinch and run from the ghostly and the unknown?"

The Black drew himself erect as though he faced a thousand. "We are soldiers of Tara, white man!" he answered proudly.

Across the plain we started at a fast run —the five hundred Raiders at our heels. Ahead the howls of the pack were increasing. Despite their recent drugged condition, it had in no way harmed the stability of the Blacks, and they were able to keep the rapid pace I set. We had come within hailing distance of the warriors before the cave, when suddenly the wild howls ceased, and then from the gloom beyond there thundered the deafening clatter of twenty thousand hoofs in a mad charge, rattling out loudly on the petrified plain, and every instant coming closer.

For a moment I was unable to understand its meaning, though always it drew nearer, that deafening wild clatter. But then as thousands of fiery eyes cut through the gloom toward us, and winged forms appeared above them, screaming fierce commands, I grasped its awful significance and set myself to meet it.

The cloven-hoofed Wolves of Worra were advancing to the attack, led by nine vile women who had been dead a million years!

12. The Nine Terrible Sisters

THREE hundred yards could not have separated us from the charging pack as we dashed up to the warriors of Shebak

to add our strength to theirs. Never before had they seen a Black Raider, or the ebon ones beheld the likes of such as they; but at least they both were human, and by common consent united against that bestial horde.

In the few seconds that were left to us, I made a mad effort to form the men into protective squares.

"Back to back! Back to back!" I shouted. "Form squares and protect yourself on all sides!" Then that black pack was upon us, and with a crash we met them.

A great brute dashed toward me, and with a leap sprang for my throat. But those white teeth never found my flesh or came within a foot of their target, for even as his jaws flew open a vicious whir of my longsword sent his black head flying from his body, and dropped the carcass to roll limp and lifeless in a pool of crimson at my feet.

The next instant my shortsword plunged into the breast of a second.

From all sides arose the hideous din that announced the beginning of that terrible battle. Howls of triumph, shrieks of agony, the crashing of clubs on bestial skulls, the horrible gasps of throat-torn humans. And resounding high above all else arose the wild screams of the Vampire-Women.

Standing beside me and swinging his bludgeon in crushing blows was Shebak. The valor and fury of the little men surprised even themselves. It was as though the pent-up anger of generations was being vented in this wild hour. The Black Raiders, of course, fought with the skill and bravery expected of them.

Foremost of our dangers was the Vampire-Women. Flittering back and forth, just above our heads, were the Nine Terrible Sisters. Each carried a long stone bludgeon, and time after time one of them would swoop down on some unwary warrior, and in passing over bring down the weapon in the resounding whack that would crack his skull like a nut-shell. In the eery light of a dozen torches they appeared as flittering spirits of evil.

For my own part, my two dripping blades were taking a frightful toll in the black pack leaping and snarling around me. On Earth I had hunted the wolves that roamed the dead sea bottoms or dwelt in the ruins of long-dead cities, though never had they been the size of these great brutes, or possessed the ferocity of the cloven-hoofed ones. Several times I slashed upward at the hovering forms above me, but I was never quite able to touch those black daughters, though it was evident they feared death by their screams of terror as my blood-stained steel whirred past them.

It was evident, too, that I had been pointed out to them, for several of the horrid things were continually fluttering above me, waiting for some unguarded instant when their stone bludgeons could crash against my head.

An hour passed. At that first onset we had been forced to give ground to the weight and number of our foes, but once we had accustomed ourselves to the manner of their attack that advance was halted, with the line of battle wavering back and forth. Though a hundred men were now down, and there was scarcely one who did not bleed from a score of wounds, at least ten times that number of dead wolves were scattered around us, and I began to be aware of a growing advantage.

Time passed. I had just beheaded an agile brute which had been evading my blade for some minutes, when a series of cries arose above the din at the far end of the line. Hurrying through the struggling ranks I was soon beside a Black officer who pointed to the gloom behind us.

"Look, white man!" he exclaimed, and I raised my eyes to behold that which

dashed away my new-found hopes like a life-giving cup to a dying man, for there, charging over the plains to our rear came a second pack of giant wolves, equally as large as the first—led by two of the Terrible Sisters who floated just before them!

A chill came over me at that moment. Could it be possible that those nine black fiends did indeed possess superhuman powers? That they could continue to bring forth endless thousands of wolves till they had slain the entire lot of us? Shebak and many of his warriors had warned that such would be the case. But I would not believe it, and throwing back my shoulders turned to the officer beside me.

"Order half your men to turn and meet the charge!" I told him, then hurriedly retracing my steps: "Every other man turn and face the rear!" I shouted. "Every other man face the rear!" And the warriors were quick to obey and cleared a path to let me through.

It was Shebak himself who brought about my capture. As I hurried along the lines I beheld the old chief down on one knee, and battling desperately against three fiery-eyed killers. Already they had dragged him some distance from his men. With a shout of encouragement I leaped forward to whirl my blade in the slash that freed him of one of them while his bludgeon found the head of the second, and the other, glad to escape, leaped away snarling.

Only for a moment did I forget the danger overhead, but it was enough. There came a sudden flurry of wings, a warning scream from Shebak. Then a hideous red flashed before me and all went black.

WHEN I opened my eyes I was tied to a stone altar that rose in the center of an enormous room of mighty, age-blackened walls and pillars, which towered to a lofty ceiling.

A score of flaming torches protruding from the bored holes in the pillars, lighted dimly with their dancing beams that massive, hoary hall, which thousands of centuries had gashed and seared with the ugly marks of time. The air was heavy with the dank smell of decay. Great clouds of cobwebs hung everywhere, and from countless niches in the towering walls came the grin of human skulls.

A large, door-like opening in the wall to the left showed a vast expanse of silent heavens and a glorious starlit night.

It needed no two guesses to realize I was a prisoner in the castle of the Nine Terrible Sisters.

I was later to learn that it was indeed one of the Vampire-Women who had felled me, then with another swooped low and grasping my unconscious body carried me off to the Castle in the Clouds, after which they returned to the battle. At that moment, of course, I was unaware of all this, although I was painfully conscious of the tightness of my bonds and the throbbing pain in my head.

For several hours I lay there struggling with my bonds, while all around me the grave-like stillness of that great room was broken only by the sputtering torches. Slowly, slowly my thongs were giving; one strand parted, then another, though I knew it would be hours before I could hope to be free. I realized, also, that the battle must now be drawing to an end, if indeed it was not already over, and with the thought of that second pack vivid before me I dreaded to visualize its probable outcome.

Time passed and the stars waned as the eastern skies grew brighter. The first evidence of dawn was streaking the heavens when a loud flapping of wings suddenly sounded, and the next moment, one by one the Nine Terrible Sisters came flying through the opening to the left and into the room—their eyes wide and maniacal, their bludgeons dripping crimson—great

blotches of that same bright red staining their naked breasts and bodies.

"Hurry, Sisters!" warned one. "Hurry, Sisters—dawn is breaking!"

And indeed they were Nine Terrible Sisters. Nine black daughters, each a good six feet, with their long hair streaming behind them, who laughed wildly as they flapped around me, then rose to the tops of the towering pillars and the ceiling above, where each disposed of her bludgeon and obtained the small golden cup whose use was so soon to be apparent.

Then they settled lightly to the floor in a half-circle, a few feet from me, and one of their number—a veritable giantess, blood-smeared and wicked—came forward with a long, bejeweled knife. She looked upon me with a gloating, indescribable hatred, while those behind her sang a loud, barbaric chant.

"Rash mortal!" hissed the giantess. "Who are you who would defy us? May the maggots claim your foul carcass, and the memory of your Ancestors be cursed!"

"Hurry, Sisters!" came again the warning. "Hurry, Sisters—dawn is breaking!"

"Not till we have slain this carrion!" cried the terrible thing above me. "Not till we have sated our thirsts with the blood of the rash fool who dared to pit himself against us!"

All this while the chant of the others was growing louder, faster. And then they began to circle the altar in a wild, barbaric dance.

"Dance, Sisters, dance!" screamed the giantess with arms aloft and head thrown back, and her long dark hair fell to the floor.

"Dance to Capara's gods of evil, who send us victims that our years may be endless! Dance that we may forever guard the secret of the Black Tower, and protect the glorious Tara against the terrible ruin that would be hers were it known! Dance, Sisters, dance!" she screeched. "Dance to victory, vice and vengeance!"

Around the tiny altar whirled the nine Sisters. Higher, higher rose their chanting, wilder, faster became the dance, as the daughters of a million years gave themselves to mad abandon, and with wild shrieks strained their lithe bodies in terrible postures.

But all this while that dull red in the eastern sky was changing to a brighter hue, a clear and fiery brilliance, whose first warm rays would be upon us in a very few minutes. Yet on and on the dancers raced, while the tall Sister above me slowly raised her knife on high. It was the one that had already warned them who first realized their danger, and gave the scream that brought the Vampire-Women to a halt.

"Dawn!" she cried. "Dawn!" And as the others looked wildly around them. "Run, my sisters! Run—run quickly! Run—don't let the sun's rays strike you!"

IN AN instant panic reigned. With loud screams the Sisters turned and fled for the dark opening at the far end of the room, screeching at the top of their voices, and pushing and falling against one another in their maniacal terror. Even the giantess who had stood above me joined in that mad rush. She had been last to leave, and for a moment halted as though to retrace her steps and bury her knife into my heart. But as the others disappeared and the first sun-rays crept up to the window she gave a loud scream, and dropping her knife fled madly for the opening.

At the same moment I gave that powerful wrench which snapped the bonds that held me, and brought me to an upright position on that hoary, blood-stained altar.

But I knew the course that was open to me, and wresting a torch from a niche I picked up the fallen knife and started in pursuit of the Vampire-Women. The dark opening at the far end of the room

proved to be the entrance to a subterranean passage, and a moment later I was running down a flight of winding, age-old stone steps, that led deeper and deeper as a dampness arose to tell of the great distance below the surface.

They ended at last in the gloomy, vault-like room my torch revealed, from which several passages led off into pitch darkness. For a moment I halted, uncertain as to which I should take, but there was no need to tread an unknown way, for suddenly a distant thud reached me through the gloom of the one to my left—a noise like that of a heavy lid falling into place.

In an instant I was hurrying down its inky blackness till I came to the rotting wooden door that shrieked so loudly and dismally as I pushed it aside.

It was a far-reaching, low-ceiled dungeon into which I entered, covered with a damp sand, its rocky sides dripping moisture, and reeking with the terrible odor of the grave. Small, furry things scurried just beyond the torchlight. But there was no need to continue my searching, for there on either side of that gloomy dungeon and down its long length were nine huge coffins. Nine great, age-blackened, stone sarcophagi, covered with the dust of countless centuries, and I knew well whom they contained.

All around me was that stifling odor and the mournful silence of the tomb.

For a long while I stood there in that dripping dungeon, a half-mile below the tips of the Castle in the Clouds, wondering at the terrible tales that dreary place could tell, and steadying myself for the ordeal that lay ahead. Then at last on tiptoe, gingerly, I approached the nearest coffin, my jeweled knife upheld and ready, my heart pounding but resolute.

I will not dwell on the happenings of the next few minutes, for they were not pleasant. I remembered the words of Shebak that said cold steel buried deep in their hearts could alone bring eternal sleep to the Vampire-Women, and the blade I held was long and keen. True, the forms before me were feminine, but I did not think of them as women, or other than long-dead things that never should have been.

Suffice to say I was presently retracing my steps to the distant world above. When I had first entered that vault my knife was clean and sparkling. When I left, its blade was swimming in a foul and putrid crimson, and nine loud screams, the last it would know, had been shrieked in that awful dungeon. But never again would the Terrible Sisters sally forth at sundown, or leave the graves they had first known, a million years ago.

And so at last I came again to the great hall and the sunlight above; and all the world seemed bright and clean, and that distant pit but a memory.

THE opening on the left led to a lofty balcony that gave a view to the tiny petrified world so far below. In the clear morning light of that high atmosphere its black, jagged landscape could be seen for miles. Far away were the three small hills that marked the entrance of Shebak's cave, and I was about to leave the balcony and begin a descent to the distant plains below, when my eyes fell on the massive structure that rose through the roof above, and towered on into the very clouds, that huge, mysterious edifice, whose sleek ebon sides glowed brightly in the morning sun, and of which I had heard so much—the Black Tower!

This then was the mighty tower which held the great secret that would bring destruction to Capara were it known—the mighty age-old structure in which the great god, Time himself, was said to be a prisoner! The two small windows at its top were the only means of entrance. Only for a moment did I stand there, hesitant.

Then with a curiosity and a rashness that must have been akin to madness, I slipped the jeweled knife into my belt, and began a careful ascent to the lofty heights above.

To scale from the balcony to the roof was a simple matter. It was not till I had arrived at the base of the tower that the difficulty of an ascent was realized. The weird formation of the structure made climbing almost an impossible task. Projecting cylindrical stones, six inches in diameter, surrounded the edifice in a series of bands, which, alas! appeared only at five-foot intervals.

However, the protruding stones did give a fairly good handhold, and for the first sixty feet of the climb I encountered no great difficulty. The air was clear, and the brilliant morning sun helped to illuminate the structure. Slowly I would pull myself upward, then swinging one leg on to the projecting stones, would reach for the series above, and in like manner ascend to the upper tier.

Forty feet from the summit the protruding stones suddenly lessened from six to three inches, with the series increasing to some six and a half feet apart. Frantic straining could but encircle three fingers on the protruding stubs. An inch one way or the other meant destruction. So small was my grip a cough could have dislodged me. Then by some fiendish fate that would choose this moment of all others, a wind rose above the lofty Castle in the Clouds, to sweep past me in choppy, swishing gusts.

I glanced down. The tower protruded through the very edge of the roof, and a fall would mean to miss the castle completely and be dashed on the plain, five thousand feet below!

I had discarded my sandals to grasp the little stones better, and now as my toes strained frantically to cling to them, I flattened my body against the cold structure, to rise jerkily and swing my arms to the protruding rocks above. Again and again I was successful, and clinging desperately, could see the window-ledge and safety but a scant six feet above.

Slowly I rose for the last effort. A gust of wind sought to dislodge me, but ever I came nearer to my goal. Now my hand crept overhead for the friendly ledge. A prayer came to my lips as its hard outlines brushed my fingers.

I had made it! I was safe!

And then my toes suddenly weakened from the strain, and I toppled backward to the awful depths below!

13. What I Found in the Black Tower

IF THERE is a cruel fate that suddenly spins us from good fortune, there must surely be another that just as quickly hurries to our aid.

As I toppled backward from the tower I had already given myself up as dead; yet six feet only did I fall. Six feet, and then my outflung hands grasped the very stones my toes had slipped from. For a moment I hung there, swaying, as the cold sweat broke from my body. Vaguely I wondered if this seemingly miraculous escape was but the brief delirium preceding death, and if in another moment I would crash upon the plain below.

At length, however, I pulled myself upward. Once more I must attempt to reach that window; indeed I had no other choice. Already my arms were so spent as to make retreat impossible. No, I could never hope to reach the distant tower base. There was but one alternative—success or death!

For the last time I put my feet on the protruding stones as I rose to my full height. Now I stood upright, my hand creeping slowly for the window-ledge above.

Flattened against the side of the tower I could hear the whistling of an oncoming gust of wind.

My body swerved at the impact, then started to sway.

With a maniacal strength I sought to cling to those small, four-inch projections, my toes pushing forward till the blood gushed from the tender skin. Not for long could they stand that awful strain. The strong winds were forcing me back as my grip grew weaker, and I was giddy and nearly senseless.

Then with a dread, sickening sensation, I could feel my right foot slowly slipping from the tiny edge it held. It was the end! I felt it! I knew it! Three seconds more and I would go toppling to that awful void below! One second more and——

And then my reaching hand found a hold on the window-ledge above.

Far below me lay the Moon of Madness. Even the roof at the tower's base was distant and dim. It seemed incredible that I had made that perilous climb, and now had the well-guarded secret of the tower before me. For a moment I paused to rest and listen, then, tensing my muscles for the final effort, pushed myself upward and my eyes topped the ledge.

It was a small room of hoary black stone into which I looked, that same aged petrification as the ebon tower to which I clung. In truth, I was to learn later that the tower was indeed but the highest mountain peak on the Moon of Madness, that shot up through the very center of the castle and continued on to its lofty height, and in its uppermost part this room had been chiseled, with its needle-like tip for the roof overhead.

The only furniture consisted of the great, throne-like chair that faced me, all black stone as was the thick pedestal that rose before it, on which glowed and sparkled a golden, crystal-like ball, the size of a man's head.

But what had at once caught my eye was the huge, statue-like figure which sat so majestically upon that age-old throne—a figure apparently carved from the black rock of the mighty seat itself, as also seemed the flowing robes that adorned his massive seven-foot frame, and the two large hands that held a weighty scepter in his lap. The great beard of that aged monarch, whitened by the snow of centuries and reaching to an amazing length, had grown around and around the throne upon which he sat, lost in deep revery, and buried in dreams.

And then as I raised myself cautiously through the window, the slight noise aroused the hoary monarch, and his heavy eyelids opened to turn upon me a proud questioning glance, weighty with ages. The next instant those eyes opened wide in amazement, though his statue-like features remained unmoved, nor did a single muscle flicker or quiver on his great frame. This made certain that which I had instantly suspected.

The giant was of such a hoary, unthinkable antiquity, and had so long occupied that great seat, that he himself had turned into age-blackened stone!

Then as I continued to stand and stare there came to me these words, although I heard no voice, nor did his lips betray the slightest movement.

"You—you are a human!" The amazement, the incredulity of the assertion, was almost unbelievable.

I nodded, looking intently at him.

"But how did you get here?" he went on. "Where are the Nine Sisters Tara left to guard me?"

"Dead. Dead in the death from which they will never rise again," and although I knew he understood me I could not hear my own voice. "Shebak's people first told me of this tower."

"Shebak's people?"

"The cave people," I answered. "The people who dwell in the tiny hand-made world beneath the three small hills, a score of miles from here."

HE LOOKED at me for a long, long moment.

"There were no such people, or any other in the beginning," he went on finally, "no such a thing as life or creation when Tara and I first floated through the endless wastes that were devoid of any planet, star or world, except this tiny, barren spot, that was the birthplace of us both. No; only I and the glorious beauty who floated at my side. Creation came eons later.

"I cannot understand how you were able to kill the Sisters in the first place, and now I do not know how, having escaped them, you were able to scale this peak and enter where no foot has trod for a hundred million years!"

"I was told that cold steel alone could bring death to the Sisters," I replied. "And perhaps it was good fortune that got me up this tower. But who are you," I asked him, "who talks of countless ages, and of things before creation?"

"I," he answered solemnly, "I am Time. With my birth all things began. Before me there was nothing.

"I am Time who started all, and Tara the Glorious, Queen of Capara, is my glittering, treacherous sister. We both came before the beginning, but you would not understand an explanation even if I attempted one, for its utter enormity is far beyond the grasp of a human mind. Suffice it to say that for many ages my sister and I floated through the lonely wastes of space —a space that had its own formation an instant after our birth.

"Eons passed; then came creation, first as a vast cloud of gas that filled all, or nearly all of space. The mutual attraction of the cloud's particles drew them together, so that the cloud condensed into a gigantic nebula. The nebula then condensed into suns, which by tidal attraction and numerous collisions flung through the great void the boiling matter that formed and cooled into the millions of worlds and stars that now whirl through space.

"Then in time to the countless worlds there came the creature, man—man in many shapes and colors, together with the beasts he either conquered or was conquered by; but all this while that great ambition had grown within the beauteous Tara: to destroy me and to reign supreme down through the endless ages. And then at last, with the aid of the Four Black Winds, her wicked purpose was realized, and I was banished to this lonely tower, a hundred million years ago!

"Through the ages I have been a prisoner here without hope of succor, for my tongue was severed and my great frame paralyzed, so I could neither call for aid nor flee. And the Ball of Life was set before me to prolong my terrible imprisonment, for as long as its warm rays continue to touch me I cannot die."

And his eyes signaled to the golden, crystal-like ball, that flashed and sparkled on the pedestal before him.

"But if you have no tongue how can you talk to me?" I asked.

"I have spoken no word to you, nor you to me. If you will notice, my lips are not moving. You are but getting my thought-waves, and I yours."

This then accounted for that noiseless conversation. For a moment we stared at each other, an awed silence on my part as my amazed senses sought to realize the utter enormity of what my eyes saw. Then the hoary giant went on:

"Now I understand your presence here. It took me some moments to decipher your thoughts. You come from one of the many worlds the cohorts of Tara have conquered. I can also see you are a great warrior, and though several Blacks have fallen before your blade, your heart still cries for vengeance."

"It is all I live for," I answered. "The poisonous gases of the Black Raiders killed

every living human on my planet, and I will never rest until I have destroyed the last one of them."

"Good! Then listen and I will give you that chance," was his reply. "But we must be brief, for at any minute Tara, though she be on Capara, a hundred thousand miles away, may sense your presence, and by her great mental power cut off all thought communication between us. Heed me well then.

"The globe you see before you is indeed the Ball of Life, the Ball from which emerged all notions of creation, the very golden globe from which I myself once sprung. The other—there are only two—gave birth to Tara and now hangs in the canopy above her throne, where its warm rays continue to preserve her blinding beauty. But the dazzling Queen keeps a hundred thousand miles between them, for she well knows what would happen if they ever came together—destruction!

"Ah, and such a hideous destruction, for once those two globes met they would radiate the terrible heat that within twenty pulses of the human heart would turn Capara and this tiny moon into a bubbling, molten mass."

Those age-old eyes were looking into mine with a fierce intensity.

"And that same destruction can be brought about and by yourself if your heart is strong. The ring you see around my finger possesses a strange power. Were it to touch the Ball of Life above the throne of Tara it would start the great magnetism that in ten days' time would draw this tiny moon across the void and to Capara, where the globes would meet to radiate the awful heat that would mean the destruction of both planets.

"Haste then while we can still commune. Take this ring and hurry back to the cave people, for I see before you the great adventure that will take you to Capara. There you must manage to steal into the throne room, and touch the ring against the Ball of Life. Ten days later this tiny moon will be drawn across space to Capara. Of course, it will mean our own deaths as well as the others, but your purpose shall have been accomplished, and I will gain my so long, long sought revenge."

To hesitate against the will of this commanding giant was unthinkable, and the mission he had outlined was one I readily welcomed. In an instant I had stepped forward, and removing the heavy crystal-like ring from his age-old stone finger, slipped it onto my own. Then I stepped back to learn my next immediate move.

"Now hurry, warrior. Descend the tower at once and return to the cave people. Haste, then, for I see——"

And then our communication ended with the same suddenness a string is snapped asunder. One instant the giant's thoughts came clearly to me, the next I could make out nothing. But I recalled his warning and intuitively knew that though she was on a different planet, the great Queen Tara, of whose beauty and power I had heard so much, had sensed my presence in this tower of Time, and by her own thought-waves had cut off our communication.

That alone told of the giant mentality of the Queen of the Stars who ruled in her distant palace of gold. It was useless to hope for any further information from the stone giant before me. I would have given much to know what it was that he had seen, but that I must hasten at once to the cave people was all I had been able to learn.

THE eyes of the great god were looking down at me in an agonizing, beseeching manner, but no further message came to me, though one needed only to look at those eyes to realize the terrible mental struggle that was being waged in the

brain of that massive stone head as he sought to convey some warning or advice to me. But evidently the mind of the distant Queen was even stronger than his own. I realized also that everything depended on my immediate judgment.

But what to do? The wind without had been gradually rising till it was now whistling around the tower with the fury of a tempest. To attempt to descend in that raging storm would be madness. I would be swept from the projecting stones and dashed to my death before I had descended my own length.

And yet I must do something, and at once. The eyes of Time were looking at me hopefully, imploringly. Wildly my eyes swept around that barren room for some other exit, but there was none. And then as I stood there, puzzled and desperate, there flashed to me that one way which showed how it could be done, a way so fantastic, so incredible, that it must have been akin to madness.

But yet it was a way!

I have mentioned the huge beard of the giant god. It descended from his great chin in a thick, snow-white mass, and falling to the floor wound around and around his stone throne. In that age-old mass of hair I saw my escape. In a minute I was beside it, unwinding its great length. The next I had stepped to the window, watching the huge mass fall and unfold to the void below, dropping, dropping till its far end just brushed the roof a hundred feet beneath me.

I turned for one last look at Time while around the tower the wind whistled wildly, and though that hoary god could neither speak nor register emotion, those two dark eyes showed their approval of my act.

Then with a shout of farewell and a wave of my hand, I pulled myself upward and through the window; then lowering myself to arm's length from the sill, I grasped Time's great beard and began my descent to the roof below.

It is needless to mention that nightmarish descent, as swinging wildly and pendulum-like in that raging tornado, I worked my slow way down that most fantastic of all ladders. Sometimes the wind would come in great gusts that swung me a score of feet on either side of the tower. Sometimes it would abate for an instant that would send me crashing against the hard sides of the edifice, bruised and only half conscious. But the beard I clung to had been strengthened by the ages, and the purpose of my struggle was a just and worthy one; and at length I had traversed the long beard of Time, and felt my feet touch the roof a hundred feet below the tower's top.

From there I made my way to the great altar chamber, and from there to the courtyard below. Here I found the narrow pathway that led down through the mountain. Along this I hurried, and two hours later found myself on the black, desolate plain, with the Castle in the Clouds high on the peak above. By now the storm had abated.

Then without a backward glance at the mighty fortress or the lofty tower above it, I set off at a rapid trot toward the cave of Shebak, twenty long miles away.

You will not want to miss next month's instalment of this story, which tells of the golden city of Tara, Queen of the Stars, and of what happened in the silent watches of the night. Reserve your copy at your magazine dealer's now.

Bramwell's Guardian

By AUGUST W. DERLETH

An odd story about the strange doom that followed the finding of an old Druidic ring on Salisbury Plain

MR. ALEXANDER BRAMWELL was a methodical, unimaginative man who enjoyed nothing more than occasional trips into the country from his home in St. John's Wood, London. He was tall and thin, somewhat stoop-shouldered, with a habit of peering owlishly through thick-lensed glasses. You would not have thought Bramwell possessed of a hobby, but he was. He was a confirmed putterer; he was the kind of elderly gentleman who cannot resist the temptation to poke his cane down a hole to see whether or not some creature will show itself.

For that reason, Alexander Bramwell made a practise of taking excursions into all parts of the country, the stranger regions the better, and at the time of his strange end, his house was a veritable museum of odd mementoes gathered from all parts of Britain. This was, of course, before Alexander Bramwell got into trouble; for he did get into trouble. It was inevitable that he would, despite his innate caution about the police, the rules and regulations, which he was scrupulously careful to observe in every case.

However, there were certain rules and regulations of which Alexander Bramwell was blissfully unaware. This was not strange, for doubtless they had been in existence long before the line of Bramwell made its appearance on the face of the earth.

The occasion of Bramwell's transgression was a hot day in August; the place, that great somber country called Salisbury Plain. On this day, Bramwell, tired and dusty, sat down in an obscure corner of the plain to rest. The place he chose to occupy was a rocky corner in an otherwise desolate expanse: some bushes, a grove of trees in the near distance, and a solitary spot of shadow sufficiently large to shield a man from the sun. It was in that shadow that Alexander Bramwell sat. For a while he was quite content just to sit, his lazy eyes fixed upon the shimmering waves of heat, his ears given to listening to the high, musical cries of kestrels riding a wind too far above the earth's surface to mitigate the sun's heat. After a little, he became restless; he wanted to move around, but it was too hot to move. He began to scuff his feet absently against the rocky ground and was suddenly aware that he had uncovered a crevice that bore the appearance of manufacture by human hands. Instantly he forgot the heat and came to his knees to examine it, pulling away a little more of the crumbling stone.

He had indeed discovered something: a tiny cavity, hollowed out of stone and covered over again by rock worn thin by long centuries of weather. In the initial darkness, Bramwell saw nothing but the cavity's walls; it was only at second glance that his eyes fell upon the small stone ring, set with some kind of gleaming thing of which he had never seen the like. It lay in the precise center of the cavity's bottom, and for a moment he stared; then he reached out to take it up.

At that moment Bramwell might have been warned; as he touched the ring, he was conscious of a sudden chillness in the air, he had the passing sensation of something holding him back; but he was so intent upon taking possession of his find that he thought not at all of anything but the ring. He examined it carefully; it was of exquisite workmanship, if crude compared to modern rings. There was about its simplicity a singular beauty; there was also some sort of design cut into the stone band around the setting, which he could not understand. The stone set into the ring might be of hammered gold, he thought.

AFTER a long time, he put it into his pocket and set out for home, well satisfied with his day and no longer mindful of the heat which had by this time begun to give way to the coolness of evening. The day was clear, and in all the expanse of Salisbury Plain there was no other traveler; all afternoon Alexander Bramwell had had this corner of the world to himself, with only birds and beasts as companions. When he reached the edge of the road leading to the nearest railroad station, Bramwell turned casually back to look toward that place from whence he had come with his treasure. It was scarcely visible now, but in a few moments he found its approximate location. At the same time, he saw midway between the place of his discovery and the spot upon which he now stood, a fellow traveler: a man in curious dress, he thought casually. And he thought momentarily that it was evidence of his own age that a man could have reached that place upon the Plain without having been observed at any previous time by Alexander Bramwell.

Bramwell lived alone save for a cook and a man-servant as elderly as he. Botkins had been as dependable a man-servant as the dawn year after year, but on the occasion of Bramwell's return from Salisbury Plain, he disturbed his master gravely. Without any intimation of a profound change in his way of life, it might be expected that Bramwell would resent the manifestations of that change. So when Botkins came into the library and asked bluntly, "Where is the other gentleman?" Bramwell looked at him as if the old man had taken leave of his senses. Before he could reply, Botkins went on, "Will he be here for dinner? If so, I'll have to send out for something else."

"What are you talking about, Botkins?" asked Bramwell in a dangerously serene voice.

"The gentleman who followed you into the house, sir."

Bramwell's jaw dropped. "I came in alone."

"No, sir," said Botkins firmly. "There was another gentleman—rather strange, I thought, sir, but I saw him quite clearly."

Bramwell put down the *Times* and looked at Botkins with some dismay evident in his eyes. "Do you feel quite well, Botkins?"

"Quite."

"Nevertheless, I suggest you lie down for a bit. I'm alone for dinner. You may tell the cook that. And you might have your eyes tested."

Botkins retired and Bramwell, after several times snorting to himself about this queer idea of his man-servant's, resumed his reading. A man of habit, he disliked change; he disliked especially any change in someone so old and trusted as Botkins, for a change of this nature was as important to a man like Bramwell as treason was to the Ministry for War. But this first incident he succeeded in dismissing after a while, and Botkins, for his part, was normal enough for the rest of the evening.

However, Bramwell was destined to be subjected to the most damnable annoyances everywhere he went, all on the same score; if he entered a restaurant, the waiter

held up two fingers with an air of polite inquiry; if he entrained, the ticket-taker seemed to want two tickets, inquiring whether the other gentleman was his companion; if he entered the theatre, he was subjected to much the same sort of thing. If Alexander Bramwell had been addicted to writing letters to the *Times,* he would certainly have written about this infernal conspiracy, as choleric a letter as a retired Colonial might write about a change in the governmental status of India.

WITHIN a month Alexander Bramwell felt very strongly about the matter indeed. At this time: a cool September morning: he encountered Herbert Skelton, an old friend, on the steps of the Archeologists' Club, and stood there for a brief moment exchanging the time of day and the weather.

"Look here, Bramwell," said Skelton suddenly, "will you and your friend have luncheon with me? I'm just going in."

Bramwell was naturally extremely sensitive after a month of this. He turned color and began to look very grim. "What friend?" he barked abruptly.

Skelton was taken aback. His mild face flushed and he peered around Bramwell much in the manner of a man in search of a dog. "Really, Bramwell, I'm quite sure there was a man there; I saw him quite plainly—I thought someone from the provinces, to be truthful: perhaps a relative?"

Skelton was not helpful. Impulsively, Bramwell took his old friend's arm. "Come on; I'll tell you about it," he said grimly.

They went into the Club and Skelton listened patiently to Bramwell's account. From time to time, he could not help thinking that Bramwell was getting old, but he was disturbed by the violent intensity of Bramwell's narrative. When his friend had finished, Skelton asked, "When did this business begin?"

"Oh, about a month ago. I was on Salisbury Plain that day. That reminds me; I found a ring there—a beautiful piece. I have it with me."

He reached into his pocket and handed the ring to Skelton, who looked at it first casually, and then with increasing interest, bending to take in every detail of its design.

"My word!" he said at last. "This is Druidic, I think. Yes, indeed. And how did you find it?"

Bramwell told him.

Skelton grew pale and handed the ring back rather gingerly. He swallowed once or twice. "Tell me, Bramwell," he said in an oddly strained voice, "was it before or after you found this ring that you began to be bothered with this—this gentleman people seem to see with you?"

"Oh, after." Bramwell paused abruptly, remembering the solitary figure on Salisbury Plain that day. "By the way, I wonder—there was a gentleman . . ." And he told Skelton about it with increasing interest. "I wondered at the time where he could have come from."

Food was set before them, but while Bramwell ate heartily, Skelton hardly touched his luncheon.

"Thought you were hungry," said Bramwell, leaning back after his meal.

"I was," admitted Skelton candidly. "But I've lost my appetite. Your story did it, Bramwell. Frankly, you've upset me. I wonder whether you'd do me a favor: put that ring back where you got it and cover it up again."

Bramwell's mouth betrayed his sudden stubbornness. "Put back a priceless thing like that? What ails you, Skelton?"

"Would you believe me if I told you?"

"I've found you eminently trustworthy," replied Bramwell stiffly.

"Well, then—those Druids, you know—there's a great deal we don't understand about them. We do know they had many strange and terrible secrets about life here

and beyond. Now, this ring; the moment I looked at it I recognized it as an old Druid stone, and when you told me how you found it, I began to think of some of the terrible legends associated with Druid history. Now, there's the story of their guardians." He hesitated.

"What guardians? On with it."

"They are said to have summoned monsters and set them on guard over their hidden treasure. These monsters are reputed to be able to assume any shape—even that of an English gentleman."

"Oh, I see," said Bramwell dryly. "My companion then is some sort of guardian. My guardian, eh?"

"For the time being, your guardian, yes. Really the ring's guardian, Bramwell. I urge you most earnestly to put that thing back on the Salisbury Plain just where you found it. And in no circumstances give it to anyone else, because the ring's guardian would destroy you if you did, and will destroy anyone who does not replace the ring."

Bramwell snorted and rose. "There's a vein of the fantastic in all you archeologists, Skelton," he said. "I heard Flinders Petrie once, and damned if he didn't hint at a good many strange things. But thanks, and thanks, too, for the luncheon. You people may have queer beliefs, but you can put out prime meals."

Skelton looked after him with the air of an impartial judge gazing at the back of a criminal just doomed to the gallows, shaking his head a little in pity, but himself quite aloof from the event about to take place.

IT WAS Bramwell's trouble that he lacked imagination. He had always scorned the imaginative life, and made no secret of it. He could not abide the tales of Algernon Blackwood or the stories of Arthur Machen: "Folderol!" he said: a sincere reaction if not a literary criticism. He could still read Dickens with relish, however; so he was not wholly lost. But he might as well have been. Lacking imagination, Bramwell had no difficulty dismissing Skelton's story as the implausible creation of superstitious primitives. But it stuck in his mind; he could not entirely rid himself of its shadow; and imperceptibly, it bothered him. It was nothing short of nonsense in his estimation, but it was irritating nonsense, nevertheless.

Within a week, Bramwell's existence was disturbed even more profoundly.

He had to get up in the night to answer the telephone, it being Botkins' night out, and, moving toward the chair on which hung the coat in the pocket of which the ring still was, he was startled by sight of someone sitting there. The vision lasted but a moment; then it was gone. But it was clear, it was distinct; even for so methodical a man as Bramwell, it could not be dismissed as an hallucination, or as some effect of light and shadow in the dark room; it was a concrete fact. But it was also true that no one sat on the chair when Bramwell came up to it; it was empty, yet there lay in the air a tangible smell of age, the aroma of something ancient, something incredibly old, assailing his nostrils as they were assailed on those occasions when he penetrated underground passages in old houses, or caverns in the cliffs near Dover.

He hardly slept for the rest of the night, and in the morning he telephoned Skelton for some further details. But Skelton had nothing more to offer him; he seemed vaguely surprised that Bramwell was still interested, and only reiterated his urgent request that Bramwell return the treasure to its hiding-place. This was not helpful; so Bramwell stubbornly set himself to studiously ignoring the slowly growing evidence of strangeness around him, assuring himself that Botkins had always looked at him queerly, that the cook had always had a slightly evident fear of him,

that his neighbors had been more or less distant toward him for as long as he had known them.

He saw his guardian again in early October, this time quite clearly: so clearly, in fact, that he started awake with perspiration on his brow, for the guardian, a creature built like a man and yet not one, with subtle horror like an aura around it, was sitting on his bedside. It was an unnerving experience, and any normal man would have taken a lesson from it. But not Alexander Bramwell, not he. There was enough Teuton in his ancestry to make him even more stubborn than the average Englishman: a bad combination for Bramwell's future.

He lay awake the rest of the night after his guardian vanished, pondering his vision, and finally came to the conclusion that Skelton's story was really at the bottom of it all, he having so stimulated those centers of his brain responsible for this sort of manifestation that Bramwell fell a natural victim to hallucination.

This was a momentarily comforting conclusion to arrive at, but again, not helpful.

For that matter, Skelton was obviously afraid of the ring. So Bramwell hit upon an ingenious idea designed at one and the same time to demonstrate his conviction of Skelton's error and to punish Skelton for having frightened him. Despite his love for the ring, he put it into a box and mailed it to Skelton.

This was on the following evening. Having accomplished this satisfying task, Bramwell made his way back to his library and settled himself to the *Times*. It was unfortunate for him that having thought enough of Skelton's story at the last to attempt frightening him with the ring, he did not remember all of it, especially that part of it pertaining to the guardian's vengeance. He heard a rustling in the corner: a nondescript sound: and looked up to see something that might have come from the *Arabian Nights* bearing down upon him: a monstrous dark thing, like billowing smoke, with vengeful green eyes that gleamed with hellish fire. In a single instant, the thing was at his throat.

Botkins found him, and was a pitiable object for the few years remaining to his life. Indeed, Bramwell was scarcely recognizable: he was in at least four pieces, and had obviously undergone something frightful. "Blown up by an unknown explosive," said the coroner weightily.

As for Skelton: he was wise and imaginative. He took the first train to Salisbury Plain, with the ring in his pocket.

"To the unspeakable horror of the silent watcher, he lunged upward with the sharp blade."

The Specter of Virginia

By CLIVE LEONARD

A brief ghost tale of the American Revolution

WHEN the defeated army of Lord Cornwallis surrendered to the forces under George Washington, an enemy officer named Captain Alastair Graham found himself paroled in the custody of a namesake, Lieutenant Gerald Graham, a Southerner on Washington's staff.

They soon discovered that they were descended from the original Grahams in Scotland and, in consequence, discussed many of the family characteristics.

The American, on his part, found a depth of spiritual belief in the war-hardened Scotsman, while the Scot discovered, in his kinsman, one who was as keenly interested in the strange and sometimes weird legends of the family as he was in describing them.

Thus, with this bond established, it was but a matter of time before Gerald Graham confided in Captain Alastair Graham the story which had become known as the "Specter of Virginia."

"I was ten years old," began Gerald, "when, rummaging among the collection

of oddments in the attic I found a rusty, stained dagger, such as you wear in your stocking-top and which is called a *'skean dhu'* or black knife, in the Gaelic. I was surprised that my father had not added it to his prized collection of heirlooms, which included scarred claymores, battered shields and ancient armorial equipment.

"I saw that it was a valuable weapon. A blood-red ruby was set in the handle and it was chased with silver. I realized that my father would not approve if I purloined it for my own room, but, boy-like, I coveted it.

"So I began to clean the rusty blade. The harder I rubbed those stains the deeper they seemed to become. The sun, slanting into the attic, made me almost drop the weapon in horror, for those stains were crimson!

"At first I thought that the effect of the sun, shining through the ruby, was playing tricks with my eyesight, but you can well judge my revulsion when I saw that the stains were *piling up*—piling up to actual blood which suddenly spilled over and ran on to my fingers!

"I was young, a mere child, and I could have been forgiven if I had run screaming from the attic. But, curiously, no sooner did that red stream strike my hands than my racing pulse slowed. I found that I was deadly cold and calmer than I have ever been since.

"I stayed up there with the dagger dripping for a long time until, hearing sounds below, I suddenly thrust it beneath some old papers, when it stopped pouring its scarlet drops as quickly as it had begun.

"Nevertheless, the attic had a powerful fascination for me. An eery, nerve-tingling excitement called me insistently, and although I fought it as something ghastly and dangerous, I found myself submitting to an overpowering impulse to fondle that bloody knife as another might fondle a cat.

"IT WAS a habit by now, and even through my school and college years, whenever I managed to get home, I found my way to the attic and once again drew forth the dripping *skean dhu*. It never failed to pour out its grisly liquid and the sensation of coldness that rushed over me on these occasions was almost like a drug.

"I struggled against the impulse, but eventually surrendered myself to its baneful influence. On these occasions I overheard guests declare that they had been subjected to harrowing experiences beneath our roof and, in time, many of them refused to sleep there or to remain with us after midnight.

"Now I must revert to an incident which, painful as it was to all of us, was extremely so to one whose love and affection were most precious to me.

"On the occasion of my sixteenth birthday, which took place on a Sunday, my family had invited Miss Stella Manners, the lovely daughter of a near-by neighbor, to spend the week-end with us. She was a most beautiful and lady-like girl and it was understood that, in due time, our families and estates would be joined when Stella and I were married.

"The festivities were continued until well past midnight, when I bade Stella good-night. We kissed on the stairway and then, with her candle shedding a glimmering light on the old pictures that lined the walls, she retired. I was very tired myself and in a very short time was fast asleep.

"Somewhere between two-thirty and three o'clock in the morning a frightful shriek rent the quiet of our home. Again that unearthly shriek rang out and I made haste to throw on a gown.

"Dashing into the hall I stopped in terror and amazement.

"Stella Manners, her hair like a black banner behind her, was flying down the

hallway as if the fiends of Hell were after her.

"The stark terror in her eyes struck me motionless so that I was rooted to the ground. The great pupils of her eyes were wide in horror—a horror such as I have not seen upon the faces of the dead in battle.

"And now—as she suddenly caught sight of my face—her shrieks were redoubled, ringing in my ears like the doleful screech of some eldritch witch. Her head snapped back to stare with mad eyes at whatever shade pursued her, and then she covered her face to blot out the sight of me and screamed again.

"Our other guests, aroused by this terrible scene, were quick to aid her. Trembling in every nerve, she broke from their tenderly restraining hands, leaping into the air and shrieking again and again.

"It was very fortunate that among our guests was the family physician, Doctor Elton, who administered a sedative, and, under the watchful gaze of my mother, Stella drifted off into a troubled sleep in a room adjoining that of my parents.

"Since that day I have not spoken to Stella nor she to me. But through my parents I discovered that she had experienced a most awful and nerve-racking vision in our house that night.

"SHE had awakened to find a cold, almost icy draft sweeping across her bed. Involuntarily, she had stretched out her hand to pull the coverlet higher—and had stopped, immobile and nerveless, at the sight which met her eyes!

In a patch of greenish light from whose center it seemed the icy draft emanated she saw the figures of two young Highlanders, one of whom, she had tearfully told my mother, was exactly like me!

"The other, slim and dark and dressed in vivid garments that had a French influence, seemed related to him, for he had the same high cheek-bones and the same bearing of arrogant pride.

"As she watched them, fascinated as to whether they were of this world or the next, they began to quarrel—in silence. Their faces contorted savagely and they gripped their long claymores. Suddenly, both weapons flashed from the scabbards and in an instant they were fighting madly, bitterly, silently—but *to the death!*

"The fight swayed this way and that. They pressed with deadly eagerness. Both swords, swung with demoniac energy, crashed together and snapped off short, and as if moved by a common impulse both men threw the shards away and drew their shining dirks.

"They circled, each seeking for a lethal stroke, and their rage-distorted faces and the black hatred that seemed to stream from their eyes chilled Stella with mortal dread. She sat up in bed, clutching the clothes around her knees, and watched with fascinated eyes, while the deadly duel continued.

"Finally one of them, the one least like me, was victorious and twisted the other's dirk from his hand. His opponent fell to the ground on one knee and in the instinctive motion allowed his grasping hand to drop on the ready hilt of his *skean dhu.*

"To the unspeakable horror of the silent watcher he lunged upward with the sharp blade, tearing into the entrails of his antagonist who, at that instant, was about to deal him his death blow.

"The man with the dirk must have let his soul go out in a scream of agony, for his mouth shot open instantly and his eyes stuck from his head in a frightful glare. In the same motion the other rose and with swift, slicing strokes reduced that face to bloody ribbons before plunging his *skean dhu* into his enemy's heart.

"That was the final blow also to Stella. What happened after that you already know."

Gerald Graham, breathing deeply, ceased speaking.

"It was, indeed, a frightful experience," said Captain Alexander Graham wearily. He rose, his face gray, and tugged at his belt. "And, naturally, you want to know what it portends, why you and yours are subjected to this awful visitation?"

Gerald nodded. "Yes!" he answered eagerly. "Can you tell me?"

"I can!" the Scot said quietly. "But first you must promise me that you will either send word home to do it, or do it yourself. And what I want you to do is to burn that *skean dhu* you found—burn it in a fierce, hot flame so that no vestige of it is left!"

"Certainly!" Gerald promised, wonderingly. "But why?"

"If this is not done," Alastair said seriously, "neither you nor your people will ever know freedom from this horror. It will be with you as long as that dagger is with you.

"We know of it at home," he continued. "We call it the bloody *skean dhu* of Colin Graham, one of our wildest ancestors, one from whom you are descended. This Colin killed his cousin in that awful duel many years ago and fled the vengeance of the family.

"Perhaps your father knew of it. Perhaps he did not wish to shadow your life with the guilty knowledge of your forebears. In any event it is on *your* side. Had it been us—we would have suffered in like manner.

"I am glad you told me this story, for it explains, improbable though it sounds, the death of my younger brother, Ian. He was the standard-bearer of the regiment in our last battle with your army."

"I was in that battle," Gerald said.

"You were not always with George Washington's staff, then?" asked Alastair, and receiving a negative shake of the head smiled bleakly.

"Did you then cut down the standard-bearer?" he asked. "Was it you I saw on a bay horse, dashing into the battle and leaping madly over the fallen to run your saber through my brother Ian's body?"

Gerald nodded, dumbly. His face was a mask of horror.

"You could not help it," the Scotsman said sadly. "It was beyond your control. That 'enemy' was your own blood-kin. And in appearance he was as like the victim of that bloody duel as you, Gerald Graham, are like that long-dead clansman, Colin—*his murderer!*"

His hand stretched across the table and Gerald seized it eagerly. Tears were in his eyes as he gazed at his war-weary kinsman, noting without shame that he also was in tears.

IT IS pleasant to report that when the American forces achieved final victory, Gerald returned to his home and, meeting Stella again, told her the whole story, omitting nothing. She, loving him through all these years, and comforting his mother when his father died during the campaign, stood with her arms about him as the fateful *skean dhu* was given to the flames.

On the instant of the final dissolution of the dreadful danger, a faint scream echoed from the furnace, startling them so that they drew quickly apart. But, realizing that the baleful weapon was now gone and its hateful influence removed from their lives forever, they came together again, smiling into each other's eyes, their lips meeting in a long kiss.

The Grahams of Virginia, even to this day, travel to a lonely grave up North, where, beside a small stone inscribed: "Here lies the body of Ensign Ian Graham, the Royal Highlanders, who fell bravely on the battlefield," they reverently place a wreath of flowers in which, all the way from Scotland, a spray of heather finds an honored position.

IT HAPPENED TO ME

WEIRD TALES will pay ten dollars apiece for true psychic experiences. Have you ever slept in a haunted house, or been chased by a ghost? Have you ever dreamed a dream that came true? Has your life been saved by a vision? Let the other readers of WEIRD TALES know about your weird experience. Your story must be briefly told, in not more than a thousand words; the shorter the better. It must be true, interesting, and must deal with the supernatural. Write it down today and send it to WEIRD TALES, "It Happened to Me" department, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y. We will pay ten dolars for every one used.

The Centurion's Prisoner

By LINDSAY NISBET

IT IS common knowledge that during the Roman occupation of Britain it was found necessary to build a wall from the River Forth to the River Clyde, across Scotland, to safeguard the territory of the invaders from attacks by the wild Picts of the north.

One night, walking along a winding pathway near a small village in the neighborhood of this ancient wall (now in ruins), I witnessed a weird and astonishing sight.

As I turned a bend in the path I halted, for, barring my progress, there loomed an unearthly column of greenish fire in which, to my utter amazement I discerned two figures.

They seemed to walk toward me, yet the light itself did not move.

One of these figures was a youth of haughty, almost arrogant bearing, whose primitive kilt and woad-stained* body proclaimed him a Pict. His air, compounded of disdain and hatred, was accentuated by the glances of contempt with which he favored his companion.

He, on the other hand, was a centurion of the Roman Army. His shining helmet surmounted a strong, noble and cruel face, and he was magnificently arrayed in a short white toga, glittering cuirass and gleaming metal leg-guards. In his hand he carried the deadly shortsword of the Roman infantry.

In contrast to the wild, lithe savage beside him, he reflected the pomp and circumstance of Cæsar. The Pict, or early Scot, walked with the step of a deer, muscles rippling on his slim, pliable figure.

But, somehow, despite his unarmed helplessness, there emanated from him a feeling of suppressed savagery that, in one brief flash, I was to see demonstrated in horrible fashion.

Seemingly docile, the youth dropped suddenly, throwing himself across the feet of the heavily-armored Roman. Taken by surprise the centurion stumbled over the prostrate youth, his sword flew from his hand and he fell forward on his face.

With incredible speed and agility the captive snatched the sword from the ground.

As the armored Roman, his neck bared by the heavy helmet, struggled to rise, the Pict decapitated him with one terrible blow of the shining blade!

Freed from the trunk, but still within the shining helmet, held there by the metal chin-strap, the head rolled forward and came to rest against a stump, the dead

* Woad: a blue dye-stuff.

eyes glaring sternly at the victorious savage.

As the Roman fell dead, his severed neck a scarlet fountain, the Pict's face expressed demoniac glee but, catching sight of the dead face staring at him, he ceased his wild leaping and began to back away very slowly, trembling with fear!

Although his body moved mechanically, his eyes were transfixed in terror upon the dead eyes that stared—and stared—and stared unwinkingly—bent on his retreating figure with a stern unwavering insistence—although the draining head was whitely marble.

Completely carried away by the ghastly happening, I did, however, see that behind the youth two men had appeared, each of whom was armed with the long sharp spear of the Roman phalanx.

I wanted to close my eyes, but some morbid power prevented me. So, unable to avoid it, I witnessed the last desperate chapter in this bloody tragedy.

The advancing soldiers, placing themselves advantageously, ran forward with their weapons levelled and with a powerful rush drove their long, sharp spears into the youth's body.

He leaped upward, his mouth flying open in a silent shriek of pain and terror as the long blades burst through his breast. The sword fell from his hands. Clutching at nothing, impaled upon the terrible weapons, he sagged forward, dead, his body running rivulets of blood.

Then, as one sees such things in a dream, the ghostly green light dimmed, faded and was gone. The path before me was empty of life, except for a belated squirrel seeking its nest.

When I told the minister (whose church is situated just above the pathway, on a slight rise of land) about this grisly experience, he took me into his library.

Noted for his scholarly research into ancient Scottish history, he showed me an old parchment, almost shredded by age, in which a Latin version of the incident I had witnessed was written down by a historian of the period.

"You are not the only one who has doubted his eyes!" he said with a rare smile. "I, too, saw the centurion's prisoner. It interested me so much that I searched for evidence—and found it!

"But—" and he smiled again, "I am not supposed to believe in such supernatural happenings!"

Neither am I—but—*it happened to me*—and I have no other choice!

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange Power came into my life. After 42 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure and despair, everything took on a brighter hue. It's fascinating to talk with God, and it can be done very easily once you learn how. And when you do, well, there will come into your life the same dynamic Power which came into mine. The shackles of defeat which had bound me for years went a-shimmering — and now? — well — I own control of the largest circulating daily newspaper in my County, I own the largest office building in my City, I drive a beautiful limousine, I own my own home which has a lovely pipe-organ in it, and my family are abundantly provided for after I'm gone. And all this has been made possible because one day, ten years ago, I talked with God. Actually and literally talked with God.

You, too, may experience that s t r a n g e Power which comes from talking with God, and when you do, if there is poverty, unrest, unhappiness, ill-health or despair in your life, well—this same God-Power is able to do for you what it did for me. No matter how useless or helpless your life seems to be — all this can be changed. For this is not a human power I'm talking about—it's a God-Power, and, of course, there can be no limitations to the God-Power, can there? Would you like to know how you too may talk with God? Would you like to know how this God-Power may come into your life as it came into mine? Then write a letter or post-card to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 115, Moscow, Idaho, and full particulars of this strange Teaching will be sent you free of charge. But write now — while you are in the mood. It only costs one cent to find out, and this might easily be the best one cent you have ever spent. It may sound unbelievable—but it's true or I wouldn't tell you it was. Advt. Copyright 1939 Frank B. Robinson.

THE project of having a nation-wide Weird Tales Club to exchange views on weird literature and encourage new authors and artists to interpret the weird, the fantastic and the supernatural, has won your hearty support, since it was suggested in the December issue; but suggestions as to how such a nation-wide club should function are very few, so far. Individual Weird Tales Clubs are already established in communities large enough to support them, and combine informal get-together meetings with serious discussion, to both the social and cultural benefit of the members. But what can be done by a Weird Tales Club for the thousands of our readers who live on farms and in communities too small to maintain local clubs? Their interest in weird literature is just as keen. One very practical suggestion has been made: that our readers who are interested in corresponding with other weird story enthusiasts send us their names and addresses, and we will publish these in the magazine. Why not send us a letter at the same time, telling how you became interested in weird fiction?

A Weird Tales Club

Richard H. Jamison writes from Valley Park, Missouri: "I noticed Ralph R. Phillips' letter in the December Eyrie regarding a Weird Tales Club. However, he is wrong in assuming that Gertrude Greazeale's plea for such a club was ignored. A list of names of those interested in corresponding with each other was sent upon request. I am still corresponding with several persons whose names appeared on the original list. Calling it a club, however, is a misnomer. A club has some organization, some purpose, something, however loosely knit, that holds it more or less together. The publishing of the list of names was a beginning, but it was allowed to expire there without ever moving forward. As a suggestion, why not set aside a page or two of the Eyrie for letters and news concerning the club when it is formed? One might almost say that the original club died of starvation. After the original list of names was mailed out not a word was ever heard about the club again, no provision was made for adding new members, in fact I'll bet a majority of the readers didn't know that such a club existed. If a page of the magazine were set aside, however, interest could be kept up by suggestions, news, and the publication of new members' names. One purpose of the club might be helping to put over the Lovecraft Memorial Volume. This book should be a success not only to show our loyalty to the late H.P.L. but also to encourage the publication of succeeding volumes of his letters and poetry, and the works of other authors such as Howard, etc."

Hannes Bok

Ray Bradbury writes from Los Angeles: "Today is the day of days for me, for I have just been to the newsstand and bought my copy of WEIRD TALES with the cover excellently painted by a young Seattle artist named Hannes Bok. I have waited patiently for years to see Bok do a WEIRD cover—and now the day has come. I can only say that Bok shows

SPECIAL OFFER

The Moon Terror

By A. G. BIRCH

THE MOON TERROR
by A. G. BIRCH
Is a stupendous weird-scientific novel of Oriental intrigue to gain control of the world.

ALSO—OTHER STORIES
In addition to the full-length novel, this book also contains three shorter stories by well-known authors of thrilling weird-scientific fiction:

O O Z E
by Anthony M. Rud
Tells of a biologist who removed the growth limitations from an amoeba, and the amazing catastrophe that ensued.

PENELOPE
by Vincent Starrett
Is a fascinating tale of the star Penelope, and the fantastic thing that happened when the star was in perihelion.

AN ADVENTURE IN THE FOURTH DIMENSION
By Farnsworth Wright
Is an uproarious skit on the four-dimensional theories of the mathematicians and inter-planetary stories in general.

LIMITED SUPPLY
Make sure of getting your copy now before the close-out supply is exhausted. Send your order today for this book at the *special bargain* price of only 50 cents.

NOTE: This book for sale from the publishers only. It cannot be purchased in any book store.

WEIRD TALES, Book Dept.,
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y., U. S. A.

Enclosed find 50c for cloth-bound copy of THE MOON TERROR as per your special offer.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... *State*.....

a wonderful ability in this his debut to WEIRD fans. It isn't exactly a cover that could be painted by any of your artists and be better—simply because there's nothing sensational about it, nothing really *outré*, but Hannes Bok did his best with it and, by close examination, you can see it's mighty superb. His coloring sense surpasses Finlay, and, given future chances at the cover, he will, I have no doubt, give Virgil a run for his money. I only hope the rest of the fan world backs me up on this, for Hannes was first a fan-artist and then an illustrator for WEIRD. His story is the typical story of the struggling artist. Several years back he hitch-hiked to New York from Seattle, trying to make a scratch on the surface of the sacred doors of the literary mags. He is a protegé of Maxfield Parrish, who thought so much of him that he gave Bok a box of paints valued at far over one hundred dollars. His private collection of paintings is weirder than WEIRD TALES. He is a master at portraying symphonies in color, great stories and symbols. WEIRD TALES needs an artist with such an imagination."

Nothing but Eyes

Charles Chandler writes from Wooster, Ohio: "Concerning the December issue of WT: After looking at Finlay's full-page, I saw nothing but eyes—in my sleep too!—for a week. That skull! Oboyoboyoboy! As for the stories: top honors—in my humble opinion—go to C. L. Moore, although the story could have been longer. Second place, *The Considerate Hosts*—the illustration was worthy of comment also. I enjoyed Lovecraft's poem—many thanks for putting it in."

WT in 1939

Robert W. Lowndes writes from Portland, Connecticut: "Reviewing the year 1939 in WEIRD TALES is an entirely pleasant pastime, As with all other years, there have been ups and downs, tales, covers, and illustrations which I, personally, wish you had filed in the trashcan, but, as always with WT your batting average on noteworthy material remains refreshingly high. . . . All three serials this year were weird and excellently written. While ardently fond of the works of Robert E. Howard, this critic fears that *Almuric* must

give way to H. Warner Munn's classic *King of the World's Edge*. Despite its fantastic tone, this story had that indefinable tenor of realism which, for some reason, is lacking in Howard's tales. Perhaps it is because Munn's tale is based upon solid terrestrial lore and historic realities. . . . Your reprints this year have been all excellently selected. In reference to this question: my vote is to continue this department, and continue your policy of reprinting the favorites of eight years or more back; interspersed, semi-annually with noteworthy weird tales unobtainable for the most part. But one thing: please refrain from giving us reprints of Edgar Allan Poe, H. G. Wells, Nathaniel Hawthorne—or any other master whose works have been collected, anthologized, and made available to the general public in dozens of editions. I think the rest of the readers can share your (and my) admiration and liking for Poe, but there's no reason why you should use space to republish his works when other, less well-known master's gems cannot be obtained except after laborious search of second-hand bookstores, etc. Standing head and shoulders above all else this year is undoubtedly P. Schuyler Miller's *Spawn*, a tale that certainly merited the best cover Finlay could have drawn for it. And, alas, it could not even have an illustration! Delightful no end has been Finlay's series of poetry-illustrations, outstanding of which are the ones depicting scenes from Clark Ashton Smith's unforgettable *Hashish-Eater* and the *Rubaiyat*."

Too Much Science-Fiction?

Al MacDowell writes from Walden, New York: "Although I have been a reader of WT for about ten years this is the first time I have ever taken the liberty of writing to your department. The stories you publish are all well written, but you are gradually drifting into a magazine of scientific fiction. There are a number of magazines on the market today that devote their entire publications to scientific yarns. If we care for those kinds of stories we turn to the kind of magazine mentioned above. WEIRD TALES in the beginning ran stories of the supernatural type, stories of haunted houses, black magic, etc.

FREE SAMPLES OF REMARKABLE TREATMENT FOR

Stomach Ulcers

Due to Gastric Hyperacidity

H. H. Bromley of Shelburne, Vt., writes: "I suffered for 10 years with acid-stomach trouble. Doctors all told me I had ulcers and would have to diet the rest of my life. Before taking your treatment I weighed 143 pounds and could eat nothing but soft foods and milk. Now after taking Von's Tablets, I weigh 171 pounds, can eat almost anything and feel perfectly well." If you suffer from indigestion, gastritis, heartburn, bloating or any other stomach trouble, due to gastric hyperacidity, you, too, should try Von's for prompt relief. Send for FREE Samples of this wonderful treatment and details of guaranteed trial offer. Instructive Booklet is included. Write

PHILADELPHIA VON CO. Dept. 331-F
Fox Bldg., Philadelphia, Pa.

STOP Scratching Relieve Itch Fast or Money Back

For quick relief from itching of eczema, pimples, athlete's foot, scales, scabies, rashes and other externally caused skin troubles, use world-famous, cooling, antiseptic, liquid D. D. D. Prescription. Greaseless, stainless. Soothes irritation and quickly stops the most intense itching. 35c trial bottle proves it, or money back. Ask your druggist today for D. D. D. PRESCRIPTION.

STOP TOBACCO?

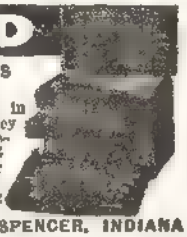
Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have. Make yourself free and happy with Tobacco Redeemer. Not a substitute, not habit forming. Write for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and dependable, easy way to relieve the craving many men have.

FREE BOOK

Powell Pharmacal Co.
Dept. 609, St. Louis, Mo.

MAN WANTED

HANDLE ONE OF OUR BIG PAY ROUTES
Sell To Stores on New Plan



Carry a complete "Wholesale Supply House" in your hand. Let us start you making Big Money in permanent business of your own. Show Storekeepers in every business how to DOUBLE profits on Nationally Advertised Goods. Over 200 Products. No experience needed. We supply everything. Free Book gives amazing facts. Write Today!

WORLD'S PRODUCTS CO., Dept. 55-P, SPENCER, INDIANA

men-WE HELP YOU EARN-women

Here are many ways and many lines to start a business of your own, with little or no investment. From our FREE circulars alone, you may conceive an idea worth hundreds of dollars to you. Make profits or save on over 10,000 articles at wholesale, or manufacture own product. Literature and USEFUL HOUSEHOLD NECESSITY SENT FREE—Write today.

PROFIT GUIDE SERVICE, 1585 Broadway, Dept. 303N, N. Y. C.
A mutual assistance enterprise—No canvassing.

High School Course at Home
Many Finish in 2 Years

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work — prepares you for entrance to college. Standard H. S. texts supplied — Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

American School, Dept. H-239, Drexel at 58th, Chicago

Next Issue

KHOSRU'S GARDEN

By E. Hoffmann Price

AN UNUSUAL and arresting story about two people who were held prisoned in the intricate labyrinth of a Persian rug that was known as "Khosru's garden." The story does not treat of happenings in fabled Cairo or Baghdad, but tells of a fascinating weird adventure in our own, supposedly prosaic, America.

YOU who have read this author's stories, *Saladin's Throne-Rug* and *The Girl from Samarcand* in WEIRD TALES, know how interesting a story about rugs can be, when it is written by this master literary craftsman and connoisseur of Oriental carpets. This story will be printed complete

in the May issue of

WEIRD TALES

on sale April 1

To avoid missing your copy clip and mail this coupon today for

SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER (YOU SAVE 20c)

WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, N. Y.

Enclosed find $1.00 for which send me the next eight issues of WEIRD TALES to begin with the May issue. (Special offer void unless remittance is accompanied by coupon.)

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

It was a magazine different from other pulp paper publications. . . . I do not think there is a magazine on the newsstands that runs spook yarns; you have no competitors in that field, so keep WEIRD TALES weird and spooky."

In Blank Verse

Florence Cole Heckman writes from South Effingham, New Hampshire: "The other evening, idly wondering what a friend was reading, for the first time I picked up a copy of WEIRD TALES and glanced through it. Seabury Quinn's *Uncanonized* caught my attention, and its charm and beauty held me to the end. I am a high school teacher of English literature, steeped in Shakespeare, *Idyls of the King* and all medieval lore. Almost instantly I found myself scanning the cadences in *Uncanonized*. It is written in almost perfect blank verse. Had you discovered that? To say that I was surprised and delighted is putting it very mildly indeed. With sharpened interest I read the rest of the magazine, and wish to say that in my opinion it is a superior collection of beautifully written stories. I wish especially to convey to Seabury Quinn my delight in his lovely and poetic tale; in the artistry and perfection of his style."

Dead Man's Schooner

Henry D. Barnett writes from Crystal City, Missouri: "First of all, a word about that shuddery little yarn, *Dead Man's Schooner*, by André Linville. It was another of those little surprise stories ending with a sudden punch which seem so rare. Even as I write this, I am still wondering just what did happen to the *Acadia* and to lovely Edith. I believe I shall dream about the strange things that happen on mysterious oceans. My vote for the best story in your December issue goes to *Mannikins of Horror*, the gruesome, insidious little tale by Robert Bloch. I actually lived a manifold life in each and every character as I read. 'Unusually horrible' is the only classification for that story."

Hang Them?

Frank L. Baer writes from Washington, D. C.: "If *Uncanonized* had been a serial I

believe I should have enjoyed it as much as anything ever written in that genre. As it stood—all too short—I found it in Quinn's best vein, admirably presented and alive with clear-cut portraits and engrossing scenes. Then, when the December number of WT arrived I was startled by the flank attack upon him by several readers. This was distinctly odd—almost weird—in the light of a reader vote of the month before when his yarn was named the best in the issue. At first glance it appeared as though his popularity had inspired a plan for liquidation. Correct me if I am wrong. [Wrong. What editor would want to liquidate one of his most popular authors even if occasionally one of his yarns proves not so much to the liking of those interested readers who take the time and trouble to write to the Eyrie? Such a policy would be suicidal.—THE EDITOR.] As to reader responses and the florid expression thereof, I am just a little fed-up with them. They go, in too many cases, beyond the borderline of expression, reaching into editorial privilege wherein the editor is told how to run his magazine. . . . Why don't you continue to be the editor, buy the stories you think are fine and worth printing, and let the readers (including this one) go hang to the nearest tree?" [We shall continue, as always, to print the best weird fiction obtainable.—THE EDITOR.]

A Great Writer

Mrs. E. W. Murphy writes from Washington, D. C.: "I read in the Eyrie last night something which simply infuriated me. . . . That was the smart remark of one of the fans on Seabury Quinn, specifying *The Lady of the Bells,* and suggesting that he is writing too much. Long years ago I protested to you about some of Quinn's de Grandin stuff, which was both formula and not even at the time always original with him, and that was one of the occasions when you snapped me on the nose for saying what I thought. Now—again to proceed to the present—I am one of what I fear is a minority who can appreciate real art. I know if and when I touch it; I can recognize it freely in others. Quinn is just beginning, of late. He not only touches art in these latter years—he achieves it with

GUARANTEED TIRES!
GOODYEAR-GOODRICH
FIRESTONE-U.S.-and
Other Standard Makes
World's Lowest TIRE PRICES
Tire users by the thousands all over the U.S.A. vouch for the Long Hard Service of our Standard Brand tires reconditioned with high grade materials and latest methods by our tire experts. Our 21 years experience makes it possible to offer tires at lowest prices, with legal agreement to replace at ½ price any tire that fails to give 12 Mos. Service.
FREE! LANTERN With Every 2 Tires ordered
Complete with batteries and newest type reflector bulb. Ready for instant use. Strong, steady light. Useful everywhere. Order now.
EVERY TIRE GUARANTEED!
BALLOON TIRES
REGULAR CORD TIRES
HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES
(High Pressure)
TRUCK BALLOON TIRES
ALL OTHER SIZES
DEALERS WANTED
SEND ONLY $1.00 DEPOSIT on each tire ordered. ($3.00 on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C. O. D. Deduct 5 per cent if cash is sent in full with order. To fill order promptly we may substitute brands if necessary. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW—GUARANTEED—
PERRY-FIELD TIRE & RUBBER CO.
2328-30 S. Michigan Av., Dept. 6443, Chicago, Ill.

FALSE TEETH
LOWEST PRICES
90 DAYS' TRIAL
If you need teeth but do not care to spend much money, WRITE TODAY about My Method and LOW PRICES. YOU MUST be 100% SATISFIED or I will refund your money any time within your 90 day trial. I have many satisfied customers in United States and Canada. MY METHOD IS FOUNDED ON 30 YEARS' EXPERIENCE.
SEND NO MONEY
WRITE TODAY for FREE BOOKLET and MATERIAL.
DR. CLEVELAND DENTAL LABORATORY
Dept. 50-BO, 503-05 Missouri Ave., East St. Louis, Ill.

MONEY-MAKING OUTFIT
FREE! to One Man or Woman
IN EACH LOCALITY
I'll give this big, complete Money Making Outfit, including large assortment of regular full size packages—absolutely FREE—to one reliable man or woman in each open locality. Year 'round profits with famous line of over 200 guaranteed delicious foods and other daily necessities. No experience needed. Full or part time. Liberal credit plan. Old reliable company. Be first in your locality. Write quick for my Free Offer!
E. J. MILLS, 1529 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio

NEED RELIEF From AGONY of
STOMACH ULCERS
Caused by Gastric Hyperacidity

If you are one of those men or women who have "tried everything" and given up hope of relief we urge you to try this effective, yet simple inexpensive way at home. Pain and distress relieved from the start. Numbers report they were saved from expensive operations. If after meals and at night you have pain and distress from Gas, Acid, Sour Stomach, or Ulcers due to gastric hyperacidity **FREE** write for valuable booklet with information as to guaranteed trial offer.
TWIN CITY VON COMPANY, Dept. 263, St. Paul, Minn.

World's largest holders of
SCIENCE FICTION PUBLICATIONS
Price list free
POIS, 2161 W. Grand Concourse, New York City

WEIRD BOOKS RENTED
Books by Lovecraft, Merritt, Quinn, etc., rented by mail. 3c a day plus postage. Write for free list. WEREWOLF LENDING LIBRARY, 227-O, So. Atlantic Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa.

a definite sureness which will, I really believe, in the years to come make him the one outstanding writer you have had. . . . *Glamour* is a pinnacle in artistry of the type you want which will never be beaten and very seldom equaled. It superimposes that Other World upon this one, breathing and real and in color; it furnishes rich character interest; *it never forces an effect*—its word pictures are gripping, superb, and absolutely satisfying. I say all this because I mean it, and I mean it because it is so. No other writer has hit anywhere near it at any time."

Escape from Tomorrow

Caroline Ferber writes from Chicago: "Ah! *Escape from Tomorrow* was an escape at the end. Why, the durn thing almost had me worried over the possibilities of life in future ages. Writer Long handled it nicely by having the Brain rebel. *King of the World's Edge* ended in grand style—the whole was excellent, although at times there was too much fighting. It was an unusual type of tale—thoroughly adventure—quite absorbing. One of those that are long remembered. The reprint is an out and out horror chiller—it's almost mental torture to think of that great gray rat under the copper bowl. A good one. While on the subject of reprints, you ask the readers' suggestions. My own is to have your reprint in each issue, selected for the greatest part from old issues of WEIRD TALES. Some of them are real treats—and your selections are usually from ten years back, approximately. There are some people who weren't reading WT at that time. I'm for the same policy as heretofore."

Nude Covers

Elmer Altreith writes from Baltimore, Maryland: "A year ago I saw a copy of WEIRD TALES on a bookstand and was attracted by the cover, on which was one of the beautiful nude studies by Finlay, I think. Later, owing to a lot of fanatics, these were omitted in spite of a number of requests for their retention. However, your stories are all pretty good and I am renewing my subscription in the hope that occasionally you will print one of the old-time covers, that is, a new nude by one of your two wonderful artists to illustrate a story therein, say every three or four months."

The Insiders

Weaver Wright writes from Hollywood, California: "Having read of the 'Outsiders' of Washington, D. C., and the plea on the part of reader Ralph Rayburn Phillips for the formation of other Weird Tales Clubs throughout the imagi-nation; I should like to take this means of informing the imaginatives of Los Angeles and environs of the existence of just such an organization in this vicinity. Over one hundred consecutive meetings have been held! We might be termed the 'Insiders,' as Henry Kuttner himself is a member and such fantasy field celebrities as Dr. Keller, Catherine Moore, Robert Bloch, Jim Mooney, Arthur J. Burks, Ralph Milne Farley, Emil Petaja, 'Eando' Binder and Hannes Bok have met our members on trips to L. A. We are anticipating early visits from Virgil Finlay and Edmond Hamilton. Anyone interested in WEIRD TALES will be more than welcome to fraternize—we urge you to attend a meeting at your earliest opportunity, neighboring weirdists! Other-city and out-of-state visitors, of course, always especially welcome. We maintain a monster magazine library for the free use of all mem-

bers, with WEIRD TALES running back over ten years, and *The Hyborian Age* and *A History of the Necronomicon*. The 'Ghouls' Get-together' takes place every Thursday night of the year (excepting rare fifth Thursdays, when we all turn into vampires and go out and 'paint the town *red*.') Gang starts gathering around 6 o'clock with Black Mass or Business Meeting approximately 8:30. The address (to be avoided if you value your life): Clifton's Cafeteria, 648 S. Broadway, Los Angeles, Calif.; third floor, right, and rear, Little Brown Room."

A New Idea

Charles Hidley writes from New York City: "Two of my best friends, imaginatively speaking, copped the first prizes in illustration and story 'contest' this month: Virgil Finlay for his character study of *Mannikins of Horror*, and Bob Bloch for dreamin' up such an original idea. Alive-dolls has been used as a theme many times before, but not with such an individual touch. Just the idea of having the different parts of my body prancing about by themselves gives me the 'squeams' and jitters. The idea of the doctor forming each nerve and organ and vein was most interesting. Applause again for these young men. Hurrah and huzzah for a new artist a month! Hannes Bok's interiors are very good —his cover superb. Best conception of Northwest Smith so far—good drawing all round. The cover was clever, too, but hardly weird. But the shocker, the 'drawing you didn't expect to meet,' was that one for *Escape from Tomorrow*. He has fallen right into the mood that F. B. Long inspired in that strange tale of the rather insane future."

Most Popular Story

Readers, what is your favorite story in this issue? Let us hear your comments. Send a letter or a post card to The Eyrie, WEIRD TALES, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York City, telling us your opinion of our magazine. The most popular story in the December issue, as shown by your votes and letters, was the concluding instalment of H. Warner Munn's strange tale of adventures in prehistoric America, *King of the World's Edge*.

WORLD FAMOUS STANDARD MAKE

TYPEWRITERS

as Low as $26.90

10 DAY TRIAL
No Money Down

EASY TERMS
as Low as 50¢ a Week

YOUR CHOICE—UNDERWOODS! ROYALS! REMINGTONS! L. C. SMITHS! WOODSTOCKS! As low as 1/3 mfgrs. orig. price. Typewriters that cost up to $110.00—as low as $26.90. Genuine, standard, full sized rebuilt office models—up-to-date improvements—standard keyboard, back spacer, ribbon reverse, 2 color ribbon, etc. Never before such rock-bottom prices! FULLY GUARANTEED! Backed by 30 years of fair dealing. Ten day trial. Easiest terms in history—as low as 50¢ a week.

FREE big price clashing catalog shows all makes in colors, details on 10 day trial and easiest terms. FREE Van Zandt Touch Typing course with your typewriter. See catalog before you buy. Mail coupon now while stock is complete.

INTERNATIONAL TYPEWRITER EXCHANGE
231 W. Monroe St., Chicago, Ill. (Dept. 2929)
Send Free Catalog in colors showing late model standard Typewriters at tremendous savings with no money down and 10 days' trial.

Name ..... Address .....
Town ..... State .....

Cash When Sick

Over 120,000 People Have Already Provided a Cash Income Up to $100 a Month

Sick benefits up to $100 a month when you are laid up from ANY kind of sickness will be paid under a New health policy now issued by the National Protective Insurance Co.

Men from ages 18 to 69 and women from ages 18 to 50—whether employed or not—and who are now in good health are eligible. No application to fill out. No medical examination required.

Sickness strikes suddenly and unexpectedly. It always causes greatly increased expenses and usually a reduced income. Over 120,000 people have already bought National Protective health policies. Over one and one-half million dollars have been promptly paid in benefits to policyholders.

SEND NO MONEY. Just write your name, address, age and sex to National Protective Insurance Co., 3010 Pickwick Building, Kansas City, Mo., and they will mail you a policy for 10 days' Free Inspection. See the policy first and if you are satisfied, then send us $3.65 to pay the premium for nearly five months. This offer is limited, so write today.

MAGIC DISC

HEATS WATER IN 60 SECONDS

Any 110-Volt Line

Millions need Speed King—gives you hot water fast and cheap. Drop into any pan of water—plug into socket—in 60 seconds you have hot water. Rush your name for sample offer for use or demonstrator. Plenty cash profits for agents. No money. Just send name. Postcard will do.

NU-WAY MFG. CO., DES MOINES, IOWA Dept. 482, Walnut Bldg.

Pocket Size SAMPLES FOR AGENTS. SEND NAME!

INVENTORS

TIME COUNTS—don't risk delay in patenting your invention. Write for new FREE Book and Record of Invention form. No charge for preliminary information.

CLARENCE A. O'BRIEN
Registered Patent Attorney
Dept. 685, Adams Bldg., Washington, D. C.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

KIRK WILSON came back to consciousness slowly. He was lying on the fore companionway of the yacht, drenched with sea water, and a litter of miscellaneous debris had washed down the steps onto him. He lay for a moment dazed, his head throbbing with pain, trying to remember what had happened. The catastrophe had come so suddenly that everything was still mixed up in his mind.

The motor yacht *Estrella,* of which he was first mate, had been sailing smoothly over the glassy South Pacific when it had happened. There had been no warning at all.

A towering blue wall of water had appeared in the southeast, a mountainous mass of sea that rolled with incredible swiftness toward the yacht. Kirk Wilson had been racing up from the companionway to the deck, when that advancing wall of water hit the *Estrella* and flung it like a toy. Then he had known nothing more.

As he clambered painfully to his feet, he became aware that the yacht was tossing on big waves. As he emerged onto the deck, he stopped, appalled by the sight that met his eyes. . . .

The almost incredible sight that met Kirk Wilson's gaze, and the weird adventures that awaited him and his companions, make a story you will long remember—the tale of a lost continent thrown up by the sea, and the dreadful menace it held for the people of our world—a thrill-tale of startling perils and uncanny disaster. It will be printed complete in the May issue of WEIRD TALES:

The City From the Sea

By Edmond Hamilton

——also——

a wealth of other superb weird stories

May Issue of Weird Tales . . . . . Out April 1

ACT NOW!

ON THIS BARGAIN OFFER.

THIS BEAUTIFUL DESK FOR ONLY $1.00

WITH ANY

REMINGTON PORTABLE TYPEWRITER

A beautiful desk in a neutral blue-green—trimmed in black and silver—made of sturdy fibre board—now available for only one dollar ($1.00) to purchasers of a Remington Deluxe Noiseless Portable Typewriter. The desk is so light that it can be moved anywhere without trouble. It will hold six hundred (600) pounds. This combination gives you a miniature office at home. **Mail the coupon today.**

THE COMBINATION FOR AS LITTLE AS 10c A DAY

How easy it is to pay for this combination. Just imagine! A small good will deposit and terms as low as 10c a day to get this combination at once. You will never miss 10c a day. Become immediately the possessor of this combination. You assume no obligation by sending the coupon.

THESE EXTRAS FOR YOU

LEARN TYPING FREE

To help you even further, you get Free with this special offer a 24-page booklet, prepared by experts, to teach you quickly how to typewrite by the touch method. When you buy a Noiseless you get this free Remington Rand gift that increases the pleasure of using your Remington Deluxe Noiseless Portable. Remember, the touch typing book is sent Free while this offer holds.

SPECIAL CARRYING CASE

The Remington Deluxe Noiseless Portable is light in weight, easily carried about. With this offer Remington supplies a beautiful carrying case sturdily built of 3-ply wood bound with a special Dupont Fabric.

SPECIFICATIONS

ALL ESSENTIAL FEATURES of large standard office machines appear in the Noiseless Deluxe Portable—standard 4-row keyboard; back spacer; margin stops and margin release; double shift key; two color ribbon and automatic reverse; variable line spacer; paper fingers; makes as many as seven carbons; takes paper 9.5″ wide; writes lines 8.2″ wide, black key cards and white letters, rubber cushioned feet.

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

The Remington Noiseless Deluxe Portable Typewriter is sold on a trial basis with a money-back guarantee. If, after ten days trail, you are not entirely satisfied, we will take it back, paying all shipping charges and refunding your good will deposit at once. You take no risk.

SEND COUPON NOW!

Remington Rand Inc. Dept 117-2
465 Washington St., Buffalo, N. Y.

Tell me, without obligation, how to get a Free Trial of a new Remington Noiseless Deluxe Portable, including Carrying Case and Free Typing Booklet, for as little as 10c a day. Send Catalogue.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

STUDENTS BUSY AT WORK IN LARGE COYNE SHOPS

Learn ELECTRICITY

Pay For Your Training After You Graduate

Find out all about this wonderful offer. My big Free Book tells you how you can train for your start to a big pay job in Electricity . . . And through my "Pay Tuition After Graduation" Plan you can get your training now and pay for most of your tuition in easy monthly payments after you graduate.

"LEARN BY DOING"

12 Weeks Practical Training in COYNE Shops

In the Big Coyne Shops you have individual help by expert instructors so that you quickly and easily learn Electricity by actual work. No advanced education or previous electrical experience is needed. You are taught . . . Not by correspondence, not by books or embarrassing reciting . . . but by the Famous Coyne "Learn-By-Doing" training method which has helped hundreds of successful graduates to get and hold the job they like, or go into business for themselves.

At Coyne you do PRACTICAL ELECTRICAL WORK on real electrical equipment.

You wind real armatures . . . run real motors, dynamos, generators. When you have finished each step, you KNOW HOW because you have done it yourself. If you are ambitious here is your chance to get the PRACTICAL TRAINING to qualify you for your start in the great electrical field.

H. C. Lewis

GET THE FACTS

Don't let lack of money keep you from sending in the Coupon now. My Big FREE Book is full of facts and photographs which tell you about Coyne Training. It also gives you the details of my Pay After Graduation Plan, Spare Time Employment Offer, Graduate Employment Service, Lifetime Scholarship and other advantages.

MAIL COUPON

AN EXTRA 4 WEEKS COURSE IN RADIO INCLUDED

PART TIME WORK WHILE TRAINING

EMPLOYMENT HELP AFTER GRADUATION

If you are short of money and need part-time work to help pay for your room and board while training, my Employment Department will help you get a part time job. When you have graduated, they will give you Lifetime Employment Service.

READ WHAT THESE GRADUATES SAY

I think the "pay after graduation" plan . . . offers the fellow who wants to get ahead in life a wonderful opportunity . . . I am now employed by the —— Power Co. I have been employed by this Company ever since graduating from COYNE . . . I make almost double what I did at my previous work . . . COYNE School helped me in landing the job I now have. James Dible

I owe a lot to COYNE . . . I secured a job after returning home wiring cranes for the —— Machine Co. Before going to COYNE I was clerking in a grocery store earning the usual clerk's wages. I was in doubt about quitting my job but I have tripled the cost of the entire course...in the first ten months. The school is everything you say it is and more. I was completely satisfied. Thanking you for your kind cooperation while at school and since returning home.—Jack E. Stroup

COYNE occupies this entire Modern, fireproof Building

ELECTRIC REFRIGERATION AIR CONDITIONING

At this time I am including additional valuable instruction in these two important branches of electricity.

COYNE H. C. LEWIS, President FOUNDED 1899
ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 20-66, Chicago, Ill.

Send Today for this FREE Book!

H. C. LEWIS, President,
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL,
500 S. Paulina Street,
Dept. 20-66, Chicago, Ill.

Dear Mr. Lewis:—Without obligation send me your big free illustrated catalog, with all facts about Coyne Training and details of your "Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation" Plan, as well as the details of your 4 weeks Radio Course you are including.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

Mail in envelope or paste on a postcard